by Neil Hulme, 09-Jan-13 06:58 PM GMT

Back To Heyshott

After a few weeks off for the festive season, it was back to work on Heyshott Escarpment today (9th January). The steep face to the pit in the image below was too dangerous for the chainsaw operators, so Colin Knight and I set to work on the heavy scrub with hand-saws. Meanwhile Mark Colvin and a group of Murray Downland Trust volunteers cleared the ridge to the left of the image, with a little help from the contractors. By the time we left, the pit and adjacent ridge had been transformed, ready for next year's Dukes and Skippers.



Re: Sussex Kipper

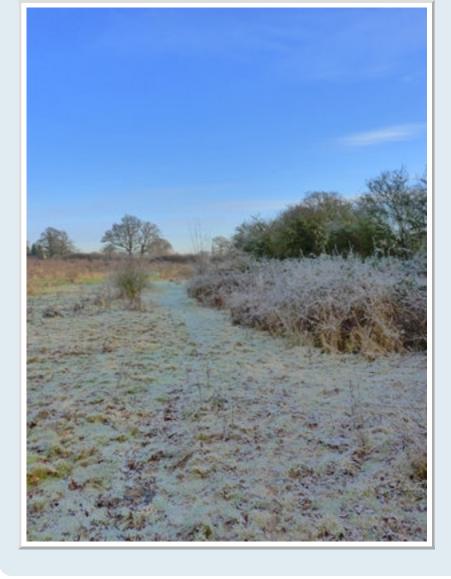
by Neil Hulme, 17-Jan-13 08:05 PM GMT

Wildland Egg Hunt

Today I started a systematic survey of the Brown Hairstreak on the Knepp Castle Estate, home to Sir Charlie Burrell's exciting re-wilding project. The 'Wildland' is already home to the Purple Emperor, which has colonised the large areas of sallow scrub that have developed over the last ten years. There are also many miles of *Prunus*-rich hedgerow here and the habitat appears to be ideal for Brown Hairstreak, at least superficially. We know they're here ... but how many?

My initial visit was slightly disappointing, with timed counts over different areas varying from between three and four eggs per hour. There is still much work to be done, but it's possible that the re-wilding process may prove to be a 'double-edged sword'. The widespread and advancing blackthorn scrub looks to be perfect, at first sight, but the grazing pressure is very high, courtesy of the free-roaming longhorn cattle, fallow deer and Tamworth pigs. Over the next few years I will be comparing 'Wildland' counts with those made outside the perimeter fence.





by Neil Hulme, 19-Jan-13 05:29 PM GMT

Half Marathon For Butterflies

Jo Clarke is running the Brighton Half Marathon on 17th February to raise money for BC Sussex – hats off to her. Please consider supporting her by donating at http://www.justgiving.com/Jo-Clarke-Sus ... nservation

Many thanks, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 25-Jan-13 08:53 PM GMT

Working In The Woods

This morning (25th January) I joined South Downs National Park ranger Simon Mockford, SDNPA 'Friday Club' volunteers Brian and Alan, and Mark Colvin of BC Sussex, for a wintery work party at Rewell Wood. There were only two options available given the icy conditions; work hard or freeze to death. As always it was very satisfying to leave the site in an improved condition, ready for the coming season.





by Jack Harrison, 26-Jan-13 01:35 PM GMT

I have to say Neil that I never cease to be impressed with the dedication shown by you and your team.

Sadly I won't be able to visit Rewell Wood this year but might make Southwater/etc at the end of June.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-Feb-13 08:53 AM GMT

Thanks Jack. I look forward to catching up with you again at the end of June, although it might be better to wait until the first week of July, unless we get a much warmer spring and early summer this year.

BWs, Neil

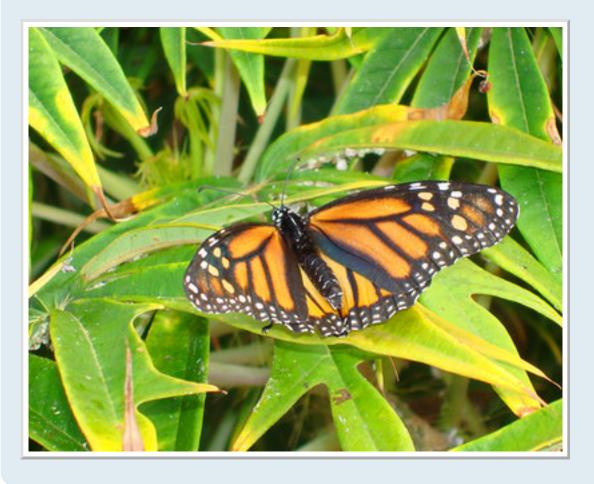
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-Feb-13 09:04 AM GMT

Holiday Monarch

On December 6th 2012 I posted "I've just returned from a couple of hot and sunny weeks on our favourite Canary Island, Fuerteventura. As always we headed to the far south of the island, to the quiet resort of Morro Jable. Butterfly interest was quite limited, but we did see at least one Monarch most days, and Hannah managed to get a fantastic photograph of one while out on her own (to be published once the pain has subsided and she takes the camera back to her parent's house for downloading)."

Now that I've managed to retrieve the files from the outlaws, here's Hannah's 'record shot' 🨉 of a Canarian Monarch.



by Jack Harrison, 03-Feb-13 09:34 AM GMT

Neil suggested:

it might be better to wait until the first week of July

Nothing yet set in stone and I'll be able to leave decisions until say early June by which time I will have seen how the spring has gone.

I like Hannah's picture of the Monarch. Is the Canarian Monarch any different from the American ones? I wouldn't have thought so.

And when can we expect a picture taken by young Mia? She could well be able to handle a point-and-shoot camera by the time she is three in 2014.

Incidentally, I have just bought a point-and-shoot to keep in the pocket, a Panasonic SZ1. That's perhaps a little too sophisticated for a three-year old. But a simpler camera for a mere £40 would be ideal.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Feb-13 08:54 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

No difference between the Monarchs of the Americas or Playa de las Américas (see what I did there? Θ). The Canarian butterflies migrate too, and are almost certainly the source of the Monarchs seen (but not always reported) coming in off the sea along the South Coast by birders, at times when there have been no sightings in the West Country.

I've saved my old Lumix FZ7 for Mia Iris. Won't be long now, Sussex Nipper is in her second instar.

BWs, Neil



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Feb-13 09:16 PM GMT

Watch The Birdie

While butterflies remain little more than a dream (both night and day), I have increasingly rekindled my childhood interest in birds. This afternoon (5th February) I headed out with my parents, to track down a few local attractions. First stop was the group of eighteen Waxwings currently hanging out in north Worthing. The afternoon sun lit them beautifully as they sat on some telephone wires in Salvington Road. Then we headed for Swanbourne Lake at Arundel where, despite the lack of Firecrests, we enjoyed prolonged views of a Sparrowhawk. Lastly, we stopped at Coldwaltham, where three Barn Owls were hunting over the same meadow. Not bad for three hours work.















by Neil Hulme, 06-Feb-13 09:04 PM GMT

More Waxwings, More Heyshott

This morning (6th February) I headed for the regular Wednesday work party at Heyshott Escarpment, but couldn't resist stopping off for another look at the Waxwings we saw yesterday. Once again they sat on the telephone wires, set nicely against a clear blue sky. One had gone AWOL, so their number had been reduced to seventeen.





By the time I reached Heyshott the Murray Downland Trust volunteers had a good head start on me, so I stayed on for a while with John Murray and a couple of contractors. Having missed a couple of sessions I was, as always, amazed at the speed of progress. Another couple of pits on the eastern flank have now been cleared.





Your young lady *makes* a fine photo today. I trust that she will *take* a fine photo in a couple of year's time.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Feb-13 12:37 PM GMT

Even More Waxwings

It might be a while before we get so many Waxwings here in Sussex again, so this morning I tried out my cheap and cheerful Raynox teleconverter on the Lumix FZ38. I'm never going to be able to compete with more sophisticated equipment when it comes to anything other than butterflies or flowers, but for a bargain basement lens it does give the additional reach necessary to get some reasonable shots of birds - at least when the light is good.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 07-Feb-13 12:49 PM GMT

Excellent shots, Neil. I can see where Jedward got their inspiration from 🤨



Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 07-Feb-13 01:32 PM GMT

Had single Waxwing on bird feeder in the garden today in Mull. The surprise is that I hadn't seen one earlier - they have been widely reported.

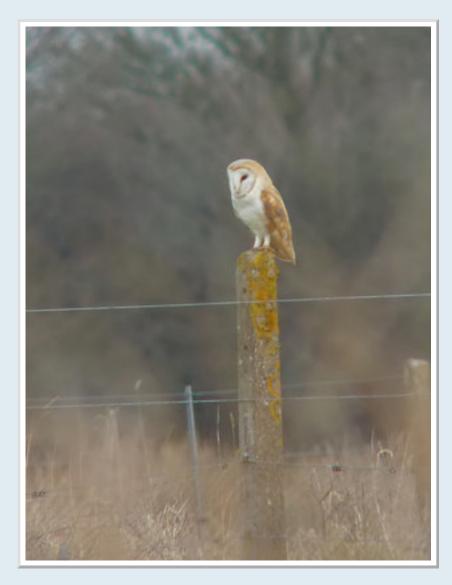
I can only be jealous of the numbers you have seen and phtographed Neil.

Jack

by Neil Hulme, 08-Feb-13 08:23 PM GMT

Trio Of Barn Owls

In the absence of any butterflies, the bird theme continues. This afternoon (8th February) I took a couple of hours break from my preparations for a talk at the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre's annual 'Adastra' Recorders Day (on conservation of the Duke of Burgundy). I headed over to Waltham Brooks, where Barn Owls are currently putting on a great show. There seem to be more around, at least in Sussex, than for several years. At one point 4 different birds were on show, but the most impressive sight, albeit from very long range, was a trio of owls sitting on the posts alongside the railway.







by David M, 08-Feb-13 08:37 PM GMT

That last image is simply intoxicating, Neil.

Barn owls aren't particularly rare, but they are creatures that make even non-nature enthusiasts take note.

To see one is a privilege; to see three in a single camera span is rubbing it in!



Thanks for sharing.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 08-Feb-13 08:41 PM GMT

Thanks David. Yes, they are one of those 'wow' birds, like Waxwing, Hawfinch and Red Kite. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 08-Feb-13 09:35 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Thanks David. Yes, they are one of those 'wow' birds, like Waxwing, Hawfinch and Red Kite.

Not sure about the last of those. Here in S. Wales they're practically a pest such are their numbers.

I see them practically every day (usually being mobbed by crows).

Re: Sussex Kipper

by essexbuzzard, 08-Feb-13 10:53 PM GMT

I'm with you, David. Splendid though they are, the Kite is so common in many areas now, they hardly merit a second glance. Twenty years ago, no one could have imagined their numbers now.

Waxwings, Barn Owls and Hawfinches, on the other hand...

Great pictures though!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 09-Feb-13 08:33 AM GMT

Red Kite are still a wow bird for me and I've seen plenty of them. Driving down the M40 Ithis week there were dozens of them and I was thrilled. Mind you, i'm chuffed when I see buzzards too and I love hearing their call.

Your owl photos are wonderful, Neil.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by ChrisC, 09-Feb-13 09:39 AM GMT

lovely shot Neil. the three mousegetters.

I remember looking for golden oriole in Norfolk when a quartering barn owl at pretty much mid day had me forgetting why i was there, nerver saw the oriole but lost about a pint of blood to mosssies lol will never forget that owl.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 14-Feb-13 09:42 AM GMT

Springhead Hill

Yesterday I visited Springhead (Kithurst) Hill to check on the 'work in progress' being performed by a local contractor and funded by BC Sussex Branch and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). The potential habitat uncovered by the removal of heavy scrub on the 'car park corner', which extends the small pits we cleared four years back (now home to Duke of Burgundy and used by large roosts of Small Blue), is far more impressive than I had hoped for. Some of the new depressions are very deep and will provide warm, sheltered refuges and breeding areas in the future. This work, which will be completed by next week, will increase the size of the meadow by >20%. Bearing in mind that the site supports an exceptional diversity of butterflies, this relatively small project should mark an important milestone in the management of the area. Since I started to work on conservation of the meadow and adjacent banks with SDNPA (formerly South Downs Joint Committee) Ranger Simon Mockford in 2005, we have seen much improvement and although the numbers of some species are low, I have recorded 38 here, including Queen of Spain. It will take a couple of years to become established, but in time should develop into a real hotspot. The advantages go well beyond habitat improvement and the aesthetic qualities of the site have been much improved, with spectacular panoramic views of the Weald being revealed by the work.







by Susie, 14-Feb-13 08:46 PM GMT

Fantastic. I can't wait for the butterflies to colonise the new habitat. 😀



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Feb-13 11:30 AM GMT

Snow Bunting

Yesterday (14th February) I spend a few more hours in the company of the Worthing Waxwings. While watching the flock (now 26 strong) descend on berry-laden bushes around the Durrington area, a keen birder friend pulled over for a chat. After he had kindly given me directions to a Snow Bunting on the beach at Goring-by-Sea, I set off in search of it. It didn't take long to locate and looked quite spectacular illuminated by the low winter sun.









by Paul Wetton, 15-Feb-13 04:10 PM GMT

We might well make a twitcher out of you yet Neil. Some great shots of the birds and moonlighting on Birdguides as well.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Feb-13 07:31 PM GMT

Hi Paul,

Not sure I'd ever go over to the dark side, but a bit of winter birding keeps the demons at bay. Back for snowy again today. BWs, Neil







by David M, 15-Feb-13 08:36 PM GMT

Beautiful little bird that. Looks like a canary cross.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 16-Feb-13 09:08 PM GMT

I haven't seen any Snow Buntings here on Mull but I had my fill last winter in Norfolk. Amazingly approachable birds - almost as "tame" as Turnstones.

No Snow Buntings seen here but yesterday saw four Porpoises and a single Black Guillemot. Black Gs are also apparently tame, eg in Oban harbour. Yesterday's was on the water near Tobermory but quite close to the ferry that I was on so an unmistakeable I/D (the white oval).

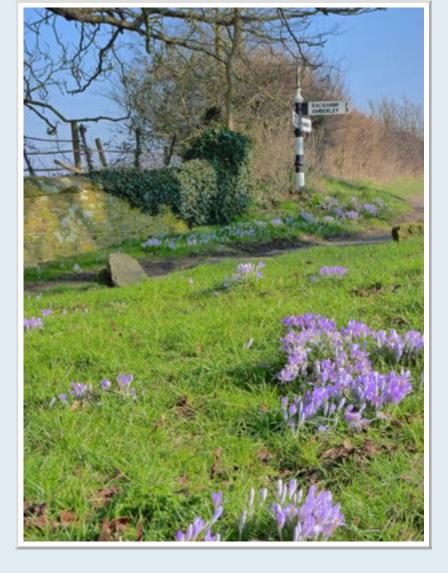
Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-Feb-13 10:34 PM GMT

Winter Losing Its Grip

After another good work-out at the Heyshott Escarpment scrub-bash this morning (20th February), I paid another visit to the Barn Owls at Waltham Brooks. I couldn't resist the photo opportunity on the road verge at the nearby hamlet of Greatham. Winter is slowing losing its grip.



by David M, 21-Feb-13 08:06 PM GMT

That's a lovely, uplifting shot that, Neil.

We've obviously got a few days severe cold on the horizon, but once we're through it, the season should naturally kick off.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Feb-13 05:15 PM GMT

Business As Usual

Today (27th February), being a Wednesday, I spent a few happy and constructive hours in the company of UKBer Colin Knight and the Murray Downland Trust volunteers at Heyshott Escarpment. Mark Colvin had other business to attend to, so couldn't join the regulars on this occasion. Inch by inch, foot by foot (we don't do metric at Heyshott) we are reclaiming more and more of the old chalk workings from the invasive scrub. As always a great team effort and much progress was made. Thanks to all that attended.





by Rogerdodge, 27-Feb-13 05:50 PM GMT

Neil

I am so impressed with all the work you guys are doing at Heyshott.

I don't think I will recognise the place when I visit for my annual Duke fest this year.

We must try to meet up - even if only for a pint in the pub the night before hand. I always stay there - very convenient.

Cheers

Roger

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 01-Mar-13 11:11 AM GMT

Hi Roger,

Would be great to meet up. Feel free to contact me nearer the time to find out whether the Dukes are early or late this coming spring. I can get out for the entire day 😊 on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through the flight period, with the exceptions of 5th, 15th and 18th May and 1st and 2nd June, when I'm leading BC walks.

Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 01-Mar-13 01:43 PM GMT

Inch by inch, foot by foot (we don't do metric at Heyshott)

If of course you were to go metric, there would be 2.54 times the amount of clearance achieved \Im



Jack

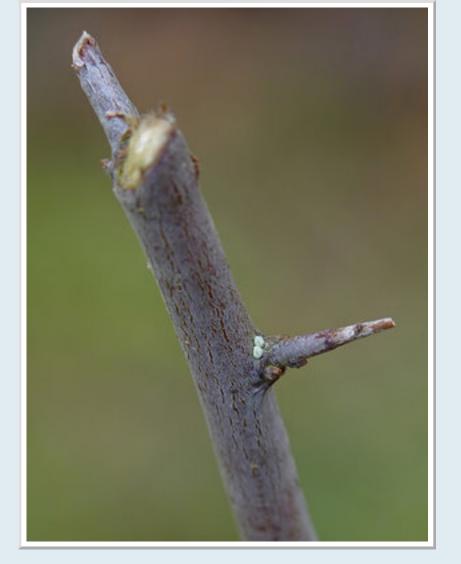
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 04-Mar-13 09:00 PM GMT

Eggs And Cat

On Friday (1st March) I continued my Brown Hairstreak egg surveys of the Knepp Castle Estate Wildland project area. The first three hours were hard going, with only a single find over a wide area, despite it being blessed with plenty of blackthorn. Although browsing pressure is undoubtedly high, this was well below expectations. A welcome relief from the growing boredom was provided by a pretty Drinker moth caterpillar, snuggled tight up against a blackthorn stem. It won't be long now before it stirs from its deep slumber.

With only a dozen eggs found over six hours, spread over two visits, I was relieved to find a hotspot in the last hour, situated only a couple of hundred metres from a group of master trees I discovered during the flight season. Most of the blackthorn suckers had been nibbled back to a height of less than 40 cm, but they were liberally sprinkled with eggs. I found 23 along a 30 metre section, including a double and a treble. Bearing in mind that egg numbers drop off significantly by late winter (predation) and that many would have been lost through browsing, this is probably the work of quite a few female butterflies. The image below shows how close the pair of eggs came to being deer fodder.







"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

many would have been lost through browsing, this is probably the work of quite a few female butterflies. The image below shows how close the pair of eggs came to being deer fodder.

I daresay that multi thousands of eggs are lost in precisely this manner (not just to deer, but cows, horses and other ruminants).

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Gibster, 05-Mar-13 06:17 PM GMT

Not to mention all those pesky volunteer work parties 🥹



Seriously though, strimmers and flails must almost decimate entire colonies. It's a good thing the females wander far and wide and don't egg lay in batches. I've never found a 'treble' before. I'm really quite jealous!

All the very best,

Gibster.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 05-Mar-13 09:44 PM GMT

"Gibster" wrote:

Not to mention all those pesky volunteer work parties 🧐



Seriously though, strimmers and flails must almost decimate entire colonies. It's a good thing the females wander far and wide and don't egg lay in batches. I've never found a 'treble' before. I'm really quite jealous!

All the very best,

Gibster.

Couldn't agree more, Seth.

Whilst out walking in the 'wild' surrounds of my workplace this afternoon, I noticed that the authorities had cut all the long grass (and everything else growing amongst it) near to the river's edge.

For God's sake, nobody needs to walk there in any case...there's a perfectly good path five metres to the left which is maintained naturally purely by people regularly walking on it. Goodness knows how many butterfly casualties there have been as a result, and all for the sake of 'tidyness'.

Ignorance must kill multi-millions of small creatures every year. If you don't really need to do it then just leave it. It's not rocket science!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Mar-13 08:45 PM GMT

The End Is Nigh

Today (6th March), while at the Wednesday Heyshott Escarpment work party, I got the distinct feeling that winter is finally on the way out. Not only was it a good deal warmer than of late, but the bird song has taken on a more optimistic pitch, as territories are set up. Today I joined Mark Colvin and Colin Knight, in addition to Murray Downland Trust regulars Mike E, Mike H, Roger, Andy and Greg, to complete the clearance of yet another old chalk pit. There are only a couple more weeks to go now before we hang up our tools for another season, as scrub clearance stops so as not to risk disturbing any nesting activity. It's then just a case of waiting for Mother Nature to do her work. Image courtesy of Mike Hadley.



by Jack Harrison, 07-Mar-13 08:50 AM GMT

I notice on the map just to the south of Heyshott Down in Singleton Forest, there is an Oil Well marked on the OS map. Any paid employment for you there Neil?

Seriously, is the much in the way of oil reserves in the area? I found this five-year-old note:

http://www.midhurstandpetworth.co.uk/ne ... -1-1548521

It does of course raise some environmental issues if there is. But they might not all be bad: opening up some clearings within the woodland could be a bonus.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 14-Mar-13 08:54 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

"Seriously, is the much in the way of oil reserves in the area?" That's very much a question of scale. Onshore wells, of which there are quite a few scattered around, generally tap into much smaller accumulations than the North Sea oil fields. They mention an increase from 500 to 850 barrels of oil per day (bopd) - that's considerably less than the 100,000 bopd produced by the platform I used to work on, and that was only a medium sized field. Of course the economics are very different, given the locations. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 14-Mar-13 09:08 PM GMT

Moth Suggests Winter Nearly Done

Today (14th March) I did an entire circuit of Rewell Wood, primarily to look at the very extensive blocks of recently coppiced sweet chestnut. Given a reasonable spring I suspect we will see a major increase in Pearl-bordered Fritillary numbers here in 2014.

While on my travels I noticed a little brown job fluttering amongst the branches of a silver birch. It was my first Orange Underwing moth of the year; a female out laying eggs. Spring is fast approaching.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 14-Mar-13 09:25 PM GMT

It'd be nice to think so, Neil.

Problem is, the forecast has at least the next 7 days as either wet and windy or abnormally cold.

Hopefully there will be some compensatory reward for all this at some point in April.

Right now, I sincerely doubt if I'll see another butterfly before Easter. ⁽²⁾



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 14-Mar-13 09:53 PM GMT

...increase from 500 to 850 barrels of oil per day...

One day's production, after refining, would produce enough petrol for around 300,000 miles in my little car. Two to three days would provide all I need in a lifetime

Put it another way: a larger less economical car doing 20,000 miles per year would get some ten year's motoring from just one day's production.

Calculations such as this put the worth of small fields like Singleton into perspective.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

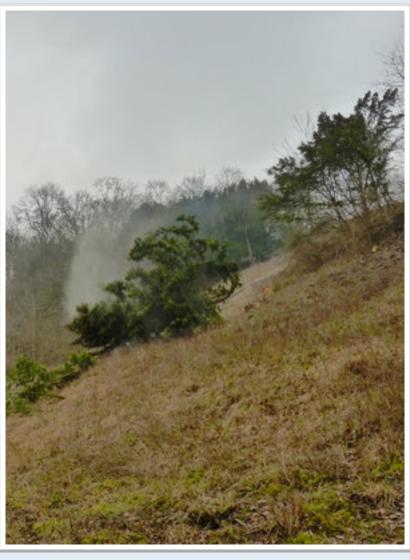
by Neil Hulme, 21-Mar-13 09:35 AM GMT

Spring Equinox

Yesterday (20th March) I joined BC Sussex and Murray Downland Trust volunteers on the slopes of Heyshott Escarpment. We split into two groups, one helping the fencing contractors and the other felling some hefty Yew trees; removal of the Yew is essential when grazing is planned (poisonous to livestock). Although the 'regulars' all worked as hard as they do every week, special thanks must go to Mark Bunch (essexbuzzard), who travelled a long distance to join us and shifted a huge quantity of timber. Without Mark's assistance it would not have been possible to remove and burn up the massive Yew seen in the images below. By later in the afternoon it had been reduced to just a section of main trunk, beyond the capabilities of even my trusty Silky.

At just past 11 am I climbed further up the slope to sit and celebrate the Spring Equinox, which passed to the sound of drumming woodpeckers. This is always a time for optimism; I just hope that this year it is not misplaced.





by essexbuzzard, 21-Mar-13 09:54 PM GMT

Many thanks for your kind words, Neil, and thank you for having me.

I am very impressed with all the splendid work Sussex BC and Murray Downland Trust have done at this great site. Giving a day is the very least i could do, though i did ache a little by time i got home!



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Colin Knight, 22-Mar-13 09:53 AM GMT

Mark, great to meet you again on Wednesday, thanks for all your hard work, especially staying on with Neil to clear the yew. I look forward to seeing you again on site during the flight period.

Colin

Re: Sussex Kipper

by essexbuzzard, 24-Mar-13 12:05 AM GMT

Hi Colin, it is very nice of you to say so, it was good to see you there, and Mark as well.

Heyshott is such a great site, not just for Dukes, but Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and many others. I am so impressed with the work you guys have been doing there, it is looking fantastic!

All we need now is some sunshine...

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Mar-13 02:04 PM GMT

Drab Day

On Wednesday (27th March) I attended my last work party of the 2012/2013 season. Rather than join the usual event at Heyshott, I met up with a mix of Butterfly Conservation employees, Sussex Branch volunteers and National Park staff at Duncton Hill. We cut a new opening in the steep, heavily wooded slope here, primarily to encourage the growth of Wood Spurge for the benefit of the rare (but admittedly underwhelming) Drab Looper moth. The participants (L - R), Graham, Michael, Tony, Matt, Audrey, Rob, Dan and Clive made quite an impact in just a few hours, which if replicated annually, will be sufficient to keep this LBJ happy. The image of mating Drab Loopers below, taken in May 2012, remains the most exciting picture ever taken of this tiny, unmarked species! However drab, we must love and protect them all.

As I came off the hillside I felt that I'd done 'my bit' over the winter months, having attended an average of a work party every week since the end of September. I always think that getting involved in hands-on conservation provides a double win. Not only do our rarer species benefit, but every Duke or Pearl-bordered Fritillary I see this season will give me a greater feeling of satisfaction as a result. To put it in different terms, I think these activities provide us with an even closer connection with nature. I'm sure that many other UKBers feel the same way as they hang up their saws and rakes for another season.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 29-Mar-13 02:57 PM GMT

Congrats to you Neil, and everyone that spends so much time voluntarily helping our Lepidoptera cousins out (we are distantly related after all!). You, in particular, are a real inspiration and set a wonderful example. I wish I had more time myself to help out with such things; running a website ain't quite the same 🔴 Although I've just found my first Purple Hairstreak egg of the year so don't feel too bad, now that my 2nd reportable record is in the bag.

Keep up the excellent work 🖳



Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 01-Apr-13 11:46 AM GMT

Thanks Pete. But I must disagree with you! Running a website such as this does a huge amount for the cause, as does providing an almost endless supply of images for use in articles about butterflies and the issues surrounding their decline and conservation. There's more than one way to skin a cat. Everyone who pays a BC membership subscription is doing their bit too. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 01-Apr-13 12:22 PM GMT

Burgundy Blog Goes Live

We now have a blog dedicated to the Duke of Burgundy http://hamearislucina.blogspot.co.uk/ Designer Gill Thompson writes:

"After the success of The Purple Empire and more recently, Ash Brownies, I had my arm (very easily) twisted into creating and designing a new blog for the beautiful Duke of Burgundy butterfly. The ideas and principles are the same: WE NEED YOU to contribute your sightings, photographs, trip reports etc from around the UK. With the flight period fast approaching (April/May) – hopefully with more favourable weather than all this snow we've been having! – now is a fantastic time to join the blog. As long as its Duke of Burgundy related, we want to know about it!

If you're interested in getting involved, please email Neil Hulme at nh@nhulme.eclipse.co.uk and you will receive an email inviting you to join the blog. If this email does not appear in your inbox, please check your spam folder. All you have to do is click on the link provided in the email and follow the easy instructions to sign up. You can write a new post by signing in at blogger.com. Do get in touch if anyone encounters any problems!"

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 11-Apr-13 10:41 PM GMT

Last Bash For Brash

The hastily arranged work party on Wednesday (10th April) at Mill Hill really will be the last of the 2012/2013 season! Unfortunately it was necessary to muster some troops to help clear up the privet brash left lying over the lower slopes, following an over-enthusiastic and untidy contractor job. The good turn-out included UKBer Colin Knight, who walks the transect here. A Peacock (my first of the year) and a black adder were spotted while we worked. Grizzled Skipper should appear very soon now.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 13-Apr-13 05:16 PM GMT

Storrington Museum

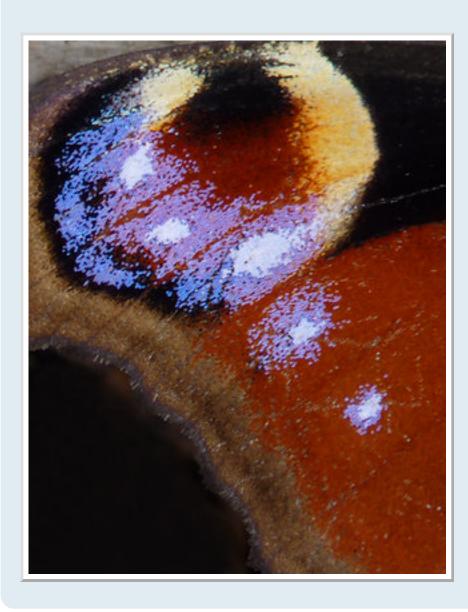
Today (13th April) an exhibition of butterflies and moths opened at Storrington Museum (RH20 4LL Grid Ref: TQ085140) with contributions from local micro-moth afficionado Bob Palmer (main exhibitor), Butterfly Conservation Sussex Branch and Sussex Moth Group. 'Flutter-Bys and Fly-By-Nights' runs until 30th June.



by Neil Hulme, 15-Apr-13 07:31 AM GMT

Wake Up Call

Yesterday (14th April), after a very long wait, hibernating butterflies finally woke up in large numbers. A late afternoon visit to Mill Hill produced 8 Peacock, 5 Small Tortoiseshell and 2 Brimstone. That feels better!



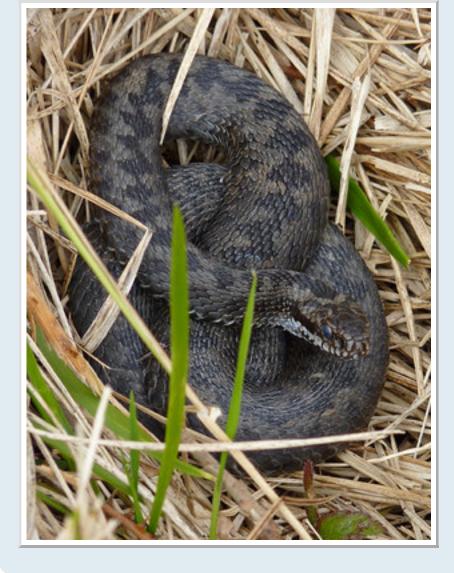
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Apr-13 02:56 PM GMT

Black Adder Goes Forth

This morning (15th April) my brief visit to Mill Hill produced a collection of post-hibernators similar to yesterday. It is particularly encouraging to see a reasonable number of Small Tortoiseshell. Several specimens of the bee fly *Bombylius major* were present today; a sure sign of spring at last. Also seen was a handsome black adder.





by Neil Hulme, 17-Apr-13 08:44 AM GMT

Last Twitch

Over the winter I've done more birding than I have for about 30 years, but with the butterfly season now upon us, yesterday (16th April) was probably my last trip out to see a particular bird, at least until next autumn. I did see a single Small Tortoiseshell, but it was the long-staying Glossy Ibis at Warningcamp (Arundel) that I was keen to see. It was very easy; it stood out like a sore thumb in the middle of the paddock. I calculated how long it was since I last saw one, which was suffering the severe cold of the NE Scottish coast at the time; 26 years – tempus fugit!





by Jack Harrison, 17-Apr-13 09:25 AM GMT

I have never seen a Glossy Ibis in the wild but there are suggestions that they and Cattle Egret – which I have seen a couple of times – might be on the verge of true colonisation. Thirty years ago, who would have thought that Little Egrets would hardly rate a second glance by the 2010s? Or even more astonishing is the Collared Dove which first appeared in England just 60 years ago. I have to say that I don't find Collared Doves to be one of our finest imports, especially when they start up on the chimney at dawn and sound as if they are INSIDE the house.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 18-Apr-13 08:43 PM GMT

Still Slow

Spring is still on the go-slow; another search of Mill Hill failed to find Grizzled Skipper this morning (18th April). This species had been on the wing for 3.5 weeks here this time last year. I then moved on to a wood between Worthing and Arundel, but there was no sign of the Orange Tip I had hoped for. This species had been on the wing for 4 weeks in Sussex this time last year. In the end I was pleased enough to see a couple of Brimstone and my first Comma of the season.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 19-Apr-13 09:01 AM GMT

Kipper:

Spring is still on the go-slow

This is all relevant information and on the basis of this and other sources, I have retimed my butterfly visit to the south of England for 14 to 20 July. Of course, timings are impossible to get right at this range, but I have to make plans now. It's then two weeks in Ireland and I won't be back on Mull until mid August - that's the peak *Grockel* season here, so a good time to be away

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 19-Apr-13 08:52 PM GMT

I'm seeing good sized patches of cuckoo flower open over the last week or so. With the decent weather predicted over the weekend I think we'll be seeing orange tips emerging en masse over the next few days in sunny sheltered spots.

Re: Sussex Kipper

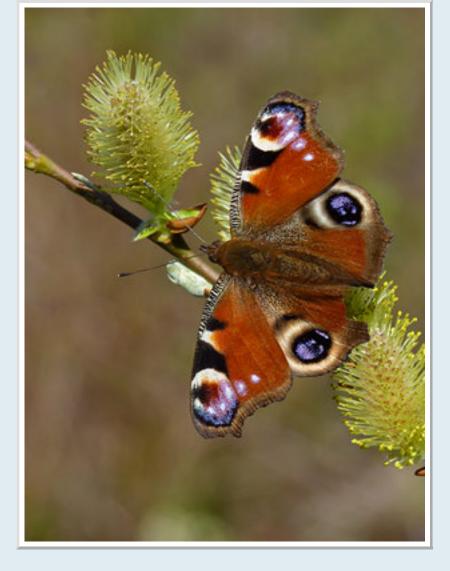
by Neil Hulme, 21-Apr-13 08:31 AM GMT

Hunt For Big Game

Yesterday (20th April) I made my annual pilgrimage to the Isle of Wight to see the Large Tortoiseshell. Thankfully it is no longer necessary to visit the dark, oppressive and increasingly derelict Woodhouse Copse, since Peter Hunt discovered the butterfly at Walter's Copse near Newtown. Walter's Copse is a well managed and very beautiful National Trust wood, with open rides and a profusion of primrose at this time of year.



As the temperature began to rise under the clear blue sky, one-by-one butterflies started to appear. Throughout the day I saw a total of 6 Peacock, 7 Comma and single Brimstone and Red Admiral. Other interest was provided by a couple of Orange Underwing moths and a Dotted Bee Fly.



But of course I had other things on my mind, as did a few others who turned up throughout the day. Soon after midday I flushed a large butterfly from almost under my feet, and although I got the merest glimpse before it disappeared, I knew what it was. I didn't even see it sufficiently well to determine whether there was extensive damage to the rear wing margins, which would have identified it as the same insect seen by Peter Hunt the previous day. After a 30 minute wait it had not reappeared and I feared an unsatisfactory outcome to my visit.

At about 1.30 pm Caroline Dudley turned up and as she approached, stopped to focus her binoculars on the same spot where I had earlier spooked the butterfly (SZ430906). Sure enough, the Large Tortoiseshell had returned and it gave a succession of visitors (nice to meet you all) a lot of pleasure over the next 2.5 hours. This extended sighting gave plenty of opportunity to observe behaviour. It spend long periods high in an ash tree, perched on a terminal bud and often fidgeting to realign itself full—on to the sun. It spent long periods sitting on the deck, occasionally closing up tight. It launched a couple of spectacular and prolonged attacks on Comma, spiralling high into the air. On several occasions it adopted the typical pose of a male Large Tortoiseshell, face—down on a tree trunk, alert in the hope of spotting a passing female. This was a faded and battered butterfly, but majestic nevertheless, and clearly the one seen by Peter Hunt.





As I left the wood I nearly trod on another Large Tortoiseshell (SZ430904). This time it stayed around long enough for me to get a good look at it; faded and battered yes, but there was very little erosion of the wing area. This was clearly a second insect. I left on a 'high'. Beautiful weather, lovely surroundings, good company, and Large Tortoiseshells. Butterflying doesn't come much better than this.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Colvin, 21-Apr-13 08:54 AM GMT

Nice work Neil.

You certainly chose the right day to go ... 🐸



Re: Sussex Kipper

by maxelcat, 21-Apr-13 08:56 AM GMT

WOW

Twenty years ago when I had time to go looking for butterflies all the books used to say the large tortoiseshell was extinct (or at least not seen) in the UK

What happened?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by marmari, 21-Apr-13 09:27 AM GMT

Thanks for visiting the IOW again, Neil. Another excellent report and more of your first class photos. Let us hope 2014 will be as successful.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 21-Apr-13 09:32 AM GMT

Yes, wow! And well done.

You are the expert Neil. Do you reckon there is a viable colony becoming established? Or are these perhaps strays from an as-yet-undiscovered colony, Parkhurst Forest a few kilometres to the east perhaps? From your description, there are some parallels with Purple Emperor behaviour. Now PE, despite its size and grandeur, has proved remarkably resistant to the discovery of colonies, eg it was virtually unknown in Hertfordshire a quarter of a century ago but now that observational techniques have improved, (courtesy largely to Middleton and Goodyear) has been shown to be quite widespread.

So could Large Tortoiseshell lurk undetected under our noses?

Sadly, it would be a rather long way for me to go to "twitch" these Large Tortoiseshells on the Isle of Wight.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 21-Apr-13 10:53 AM GMT

First class work, Neil. You thoroughly deserved your reward.

I suppose the next challenge is to find Large Tortoiseshell larvae on the Isle of Wight. Maybe then this majestic insect could be added to the British butterfly species list once again.

by rogpow, 21-Apr-13 12:12 PM GMT

Nice to meet you yesterday Neil, and thanks for the info about orchid sites in Sussex.

Great to hear you found a second LT - we should have hung around a bit longer! I shall have to pop back there this week for another look. 🐸



Rog and Lyn.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Padfield, 21-Apr-13 03:04 PM GMT

This is very, very good news!

Large tortoiseshells overwinter in places they identify as good breeding sites. In March and April they are utterly predictable and are seen in precisely the same spots year after year, while in the summer they are found (much more rarely altogether) anywhere within their range. Male territorial behaviour is exactly as the Kipper describes and providing there is at least one female somewhere in the region this must surely lead to eggs being laid. The females, of course, recognise the same indicators as the males and overwinter in the same sites.

If someone has the time and patience, it would be well worth staking out the area for the next few weeks and following any females seen (at a discreet distance). They often lay in very accessible places, leaving batches of many eggs around a stem.

Very exciting!

Guy

Re: Sussex Kipper

by marmari, 21-Apr-13 05:29 PM GMT

That is very encouraging to read Guy.

I can say that the same Large Tortoiseshell was seen and snapped at the same place in Walters Copse today by a friend.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by jhanlon, 21-Apr-13 10:13 PM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Sadly, it would be a rather long way for me to go to "twitch" these Large Tortoiseshells on the Isle of Wight.

Jack

Are you sure? I think I live just a few miles from you in South Cambs, but I'm hoping to try on Tuesday. Plenty of space in the car for anyone who wants to join me.

James

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 21-Apr-13 10:41 PM GMT

"ihanlon" wrote:

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Sadly, it would be a rather long way for me to go to "twitch" these Large Tortoiseshells on the Isle of Wight.

Jack

Are you sure? I think I live just a few miles from you in South Cambs, but I'm hoping to try on Tuesday. Plenty of space in the car for anyone who wants to join me.

James

Jack now lives on the isle of Mull, James.

by Neil Hulme, 22-Apr-13 08:04 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments all - appreciated.

As far as status of the Large Tortoiseshell is concerned, without going into detail, here are my thoughts. These are applicable to the 21st Century. I could write loads in justification of these views, but that's a winter job.

Migration: Rare but quite regular migrant to the South Coast (and IOW), usually detected in very low numbers. Larger influxes sometimes occur (e.g. 2007).

Over-wintering: Occasionally over-winters on the mainland. Annually over-winters on IOW.

<u>Breeding</u>: Unproven, but increasing weight of circumstantial evidence tentatively suggests that it is breeding on IOW. Even if the Large Tortoiseshell *is* breeding, this situation is likely to persist for a number years, as the discovery of eggs/larvae/pupae(!) will present quite a challenge, particularly in such an elusive species occurring at very low densities.

It might be a while yet before we can restore this magnificent butterfly to the British list, but my gut feel is that it will happen in time.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by jhanlon, 22-Apr-13 10:35 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

"jhanlon" wrote:

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Sadly, it would be a rather long way for me to go to "twitch" these Large Tortoiseshells on the Isle of Wight.

Jack

Are you sure? I think I live just a few miles from you in South Cambs, but I'm hoping to try on Tuesday. Plenty of space in the car for anyone who wants to join me.

James

Jack now lives on the isle of Mull, James.

Aah, I guess that counts as a little too far to twitch then! Well two of us are day tripping tomorrow from Cambs. Any further updates or specific gen gratefully received!

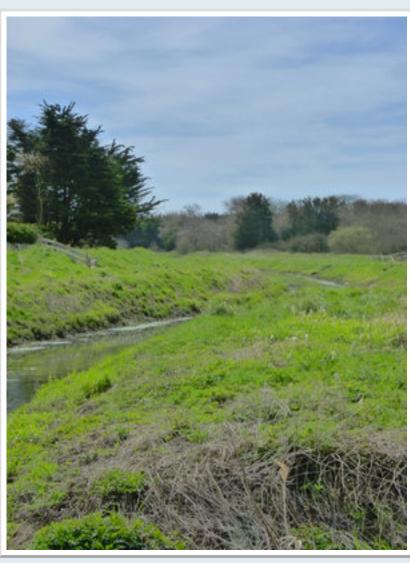
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Apr-13 07:13 PM GMT

Small Tortoiseshells Rife

This season is proving to be rather interesting, and yet it has barely begun. After the excitement of Large Tortoiseshells at the weekend, today (22nd April) it was the turn of the Small Tortoiseshell to amaze. This species has already shown quite strongly in Sussex this season, so I paid a visit to one of the best local sites I know of, to see if numbers are up on recent years. After 2.5 hours of thorough searching along both banks of Ferring Rife, I had counted 194; this is the highest number of Small Tortoiseshells I've ever counted. As the tally continued to grow I rather hoped that the score card would remain clear of other species, but in the end it would include single Peacock and Comma. Given the well documented difficulties faced by this childhood favourite, the sight of so many in one place made a very welcome change.







by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-13 07:32 PM GMT

Encouraging stuff indeed Neil.

It makes you wonder where they all were last year when so few were being recorded. I must admit I have been wondering whether some of the low numbers recorded of some species last year was due to people not going out if the weather did not look promising. My own experiences on some days showed me that it only took a brief break in the gloom and butterflies came forth. That is not to say that some species did not struggle, just that things are a lot more complicated than we sometimes think.

Neil F.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 22-Apr-13 07:36 PM GMT

I have never kept any formal counts of Small Torts but in 60+ years, I have seen its fortunes wax and wane. I once collected perhaps 100 larvae from a group of nettles and every single one was parasitized (that was long before *Sturmia bella* put in an appearance). It seems pretty obvious that Small Torts undergo boom-bust cycles in response to parasite numbers. It could be that in some areas, eg Scotland where Small Tort is usually single brooded, the parasite cycle is less pronounced and although Small Tort numbers might be lower than in the boom times in the south, there is far less of a cyclic abundance in numbers.

Edit. Mustn't overlook immigration.

This would make a good research project or has it already been done?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 22-Apr-13 08:47 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote: Small Tortoiseshells Rife

This season is proving to be rather interesting, and yet it has barely begun. After the excitement of Large Tortoiseshells at the weekend, today (22nd April) it was the turn of the Small Tortoiseshell to amaze. This species has already shown quite strongly in Sussex this season, so I paid a visit to one of the best local sites I know of, to see if numbers are up on recent years. After 2.5 hours of thorough searching along both banks of Ferring Rife, I had counted 194; this is the highest number of Small Tortoiseshells I've ever counted. As the tally continued to grow I rather hoped that the score card would remain clear of other species, but in the end it would include single Peacock and Comma. Given the well documented difficulties faced by this childhood favourite, the sight of so many in one place made a very welcome change.

Highly interesting stuff, Neil.

I too have seen decent numbers of Small Tortoiseshells thus far this year. They seem to pop up everywhere, which is surprising given how abject conditions have been so far this year.

I can only guess that last year's abnormally wet conditions have had some kind of unexpected beneficial effect. The wet weather in 2012 certainly allowed nettles to grow more lush than for many years, but perhaps they have also had an adverse effect on Small Tortoiseshell parasites.

There are always winners and losers in every butterfly year. We already know that last year proved to be a bonanza for Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Scotch Argus (damp favouring species). Maybe those damp conditions have provided a delayed boon to Small Tortoiseshells as well.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by badgerbob, 22-Apr-13 09:01 PM GMT

Fantastic news Neil. As I mentioned yesterday on April Sightings Matt saw several Small Tortoiseshells flying in off the sea when he was at Splash Point birding so certainly some are migrating in.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 23-Apr-13 07:31 AM GMT

Hi Neil, will the BC walk be going ahead on Saturday?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Apr-13 09:49 PM GMT

Hi Susie,

Yes, all BC Sussex events run, irrespective of weather. At the moment the forecast doesn't look too bad. Given the choice I would come on the second Rewell Wood walk (all details on BC Sussex website), as the first might be a little too early to catch PBF. The butterfly calendar will start to catch up now, but it's still running very late.

BWs, Neil

by Susie, 23-Apr-13 09:55 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Apr-13 10:25 PM GMT

Spring At Last

My own definition of spring was finally satisfied today (23 April), with the sighting of my first newly emerged butterflies of 2013. Having waited for so long for a single Orange Tip, 8 came together, accompanied by 4 Green-veined White, 1 Large White and 1 Holly Blue. A few ex-hibernators were also enjoying the sunny lanes around Five Oaks, including 5 Brimstone, 2 Peacock and 1 Comma. As if to emphasise that winter really has been banished, the sound of a cuckoo drifted across the fields. My mother looked after Mia while my father and I gave chase with the camera, but these butterflies were too full of the joys of spring to stop for us.



Chasing Orange Tips

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 24-Apr-13 06:39 PM GMT

Can Mia i/d any butterflies yet?

My daughter Polly was of similar age when we were in a wildlife "park" with many calling Chiffchaffs. Polly kept repeating "Chiff Chaff" for the next several days; it actually became a little tedious for everyone else! That was her first wildlife i/d. Sadly at the age of nearly 21, I don't think her i/d skills have progressed all that much. But I am sure she doesn't have the time with all that studying that she assures me she is doing at Uni ack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 26-Apr-13 08:19 AM GMT

Sounds Of Spring

Yesterday (25th April) I didn't get out until much later in the day, by which time the Orange Tips were beginning to slow down, occasionally taking on a little nectar or briefly basking during their fidgety search for somewhere to roost. What could be better than watching these gorgeous butterflies to the soundtrack of a Cuckoo, or the liquid gold song of a Nightingale bursting from the scrub nearby.

I later travelled onwards to the RSPB reserve at Pulborough Brooks, where more Nightingales were performing well in the evening sunshine, sometimes singing boldly from exposed perches. Last stop was Waltham Brooks, where I stopped to listen to the reeling of a Grasshopper Warbler as the light began to fade. Days like this are all too rare.





RSPB Pulborough Brooks

by Neil Hulme, 29-Apr-13 03:40 PM GMT

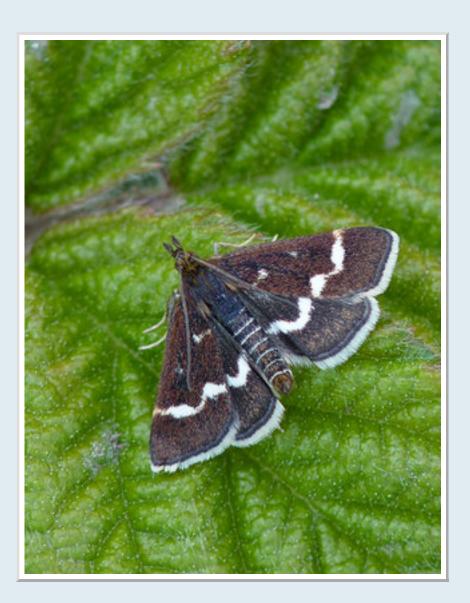
Busy Weekend

An action-packed weekend started at Mill Hill on Saturday morning (27th April) where I saw my first Grizzled Skipper of the season, a full month later than last year. In the afternoon I led my first BC walk of 2013, in a predictably unsuccessful attempt at seeing Pearl-bordered Fritillary. One thing we did get was warm and sunny conditions, which we certainly didn't experience last year. Perhaps we can combine good weather AND butterflies in 2014? Despite the fact we saw just a single (much celebrated) Peacock, it was nice to catch up with eight members on such a pleasant afternoon. Fingers crossed for next Sunday.



On Sunday (28th April) I returned to Mill Hill, where Grizzled Skipper now numbered 3. Also seen were Small Tortoiseshell (3), Peacock (4) and an egg-

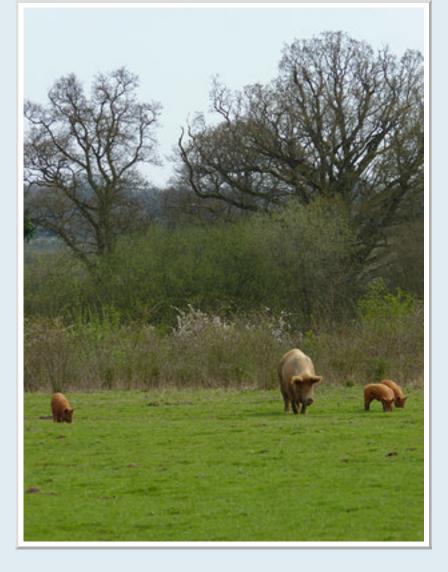
laying Red Admiral on the upper slope. Lagging a month behind last year's timetable are the tiny moths which typically swarm over the short turf here. Of these, I managed to photograph my first *Pyrausta nigrata* of the season.



In the afternoon I attended the BC Sussex Spring Social on Sir Charlie Burrell's Knepp Castle Estate. After an entertaining talk we were given a tour of the southern compartment and observed some of the changes to the land being driven by this innovative rewilding project.







This morning (29th April) I returned to Mill Hill to photograph the Grizzled Skippers, with periods of cloudy weather providing the ideal opportunity to catch them at rest. The resident Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks were joined by a Comma, Large White and my first Speckled Wood of the year.





by Neil Hulme, 30-Apr-13 10:37 PM GMT

Orange Tips

This afternoon (30th April) I spent more time in the quiet lanes and meadows around Five Oaks, where Orange Tip males have now been joined by the first females of the season. Brimstones and Green-veined Whites were also enjoying the sunshine. The recent warmth has certainly accelerated plant growth and the Lady's Smock and Bluebells have suddenly burst into life. Spring won't last long this year, so I'm trying to get out and enjoy as much of it as possible.





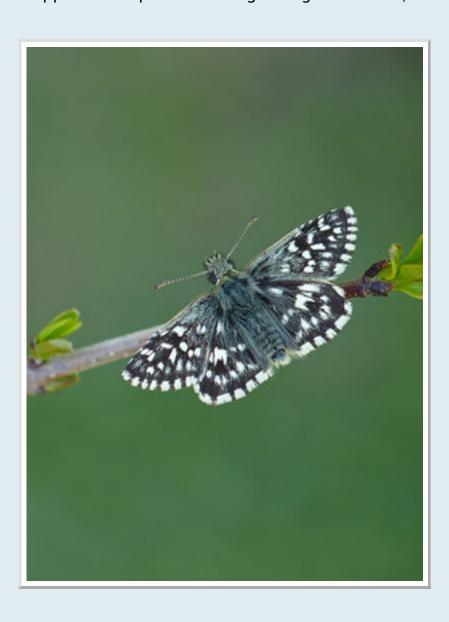


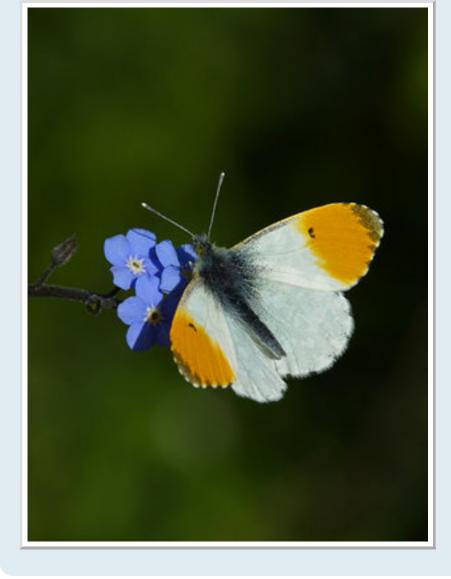
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-May-13 10:01 AM GMT

Woodlands Brimming

The Brimstone seems to be having a good spring, at least in my neck of the woods. I saw more than 20 in various parts of Rewell Wood yesterday. Peacock numbers aren't bad either. Before heading to Rewell I dropped in briefly at Mill Hill, to get a topside shot of a Grizzle. On the way home I stopped at a copse on the Angmering Park Estate, to watch the Orange Tips go to roost. I'm hoping for plenty more days like this one.





by Jack Harrison, 02-May-13 11:27 AM GMT

Hey Neil. You haven't sneakily bought a DSLR have you? Those subtle blurred backgrounds are just what the DSLR aficionados rave about. Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-May-13 08:10 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

It's true that I recently bought a second camera. It's another Lumix FZ38, second-hand off eBay. I've given the FZ38 a real work-out since March 2010, so need to make sure I have another in reserve.

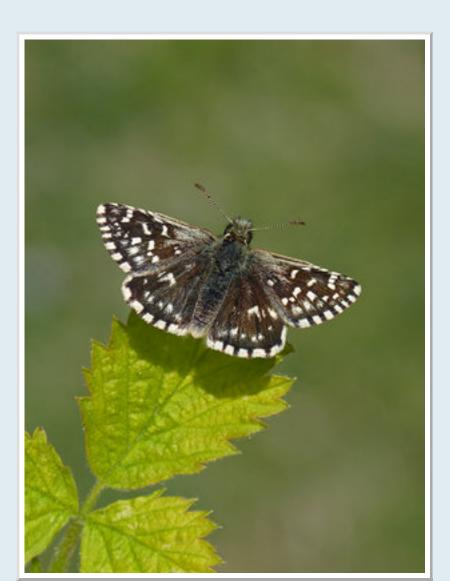
BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-May-13 10:56 PM GMT

First Green Makes It Ten

Today (2nd May) I managed to see ten species of butterfly together on one site, with the tenth being my first Green Hairstreak of the season. The final count at Mill Hill (Shoreham) was 13 Peacock, 6 Small Tortoiseshell, 6 Brimstone, 5 Grizzled Skipper, and single Green Hairstreak, Red Admiral, Comma, Speckled Wood, Large White and Small White. I also saw the small day-flying moths *Pyrausta purpuralis*, *P. despicata* and *P. nigrata* in low numbers.







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-May-13 08:25 PM GMT

Third Time Lucky?

43 people attended the BC Sussex walk to Rewell Wood this afternoon (5th May), but the very late spring continues to wreak havoc with our events calendar and the Pearl-bordered Fritillary is still refusing to emerge here. Please watch the Branch Sightings Page http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/sightings.html for details of a probable re-run next Sunday 12th May at 2 pm, which will be open to all. 3 Speckled Wood, a Peacock and a Small White did not do justice to such an enjoyable walk around a lovely wood. I also found a photogenic Green-veined White earlier in the day.



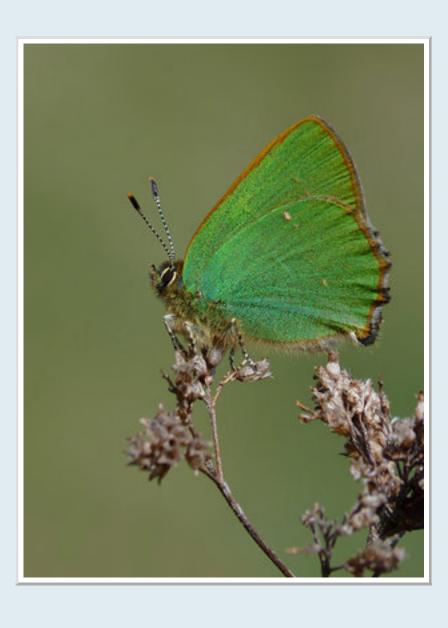
by Neil Hulme, 08-May-13 04:52 PM GMT

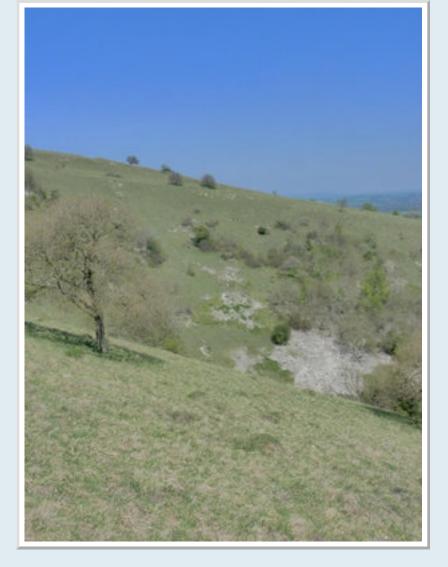
Greenstreak Revival

Although it is still early days, the biggest story for me so far this season is the miraculous comeback made by the Green Hairstreak. This species was one of the worst performers in Sussex last year, with a total of only 38 records for the entire West and East. If anyone should still doubt the resourcefulness and resilience of these frail creatures, then the Green Hairstreak revival should settle the matter once and for all. On Monday (6th May) I counted 63 male butterflies on a downland slope near Storrington.

It is even more pleasing to report that this was over an area cleared of impenetrable scrub and secondary woodland by the South Downs National Park Nature Improvement Area project, creating bare ground and allowing the limited rejuvenation of early stage scrub. Amongst other butterflies, Grizzled Skipper (9) and Dingy Skipper (2) have moved into this newly created home.

Almost every available perch was being defended by argumentative hairstreaks and three or four at a time would form tight aerial bundles as they contested the prime spots. During the late afternoon I watched about a dozen go to roost in a Scots Pine, wedging themselves between the needles.







by Mark Colvin, 08-May-13 06:37 PM GMT

Great news, Neil.

Just the sort of positive account we need to hear after the difficult conditions experienced in 2012.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 08-May-13 06:58 PM GMT

Greenstreaks are allegedly widespread on Mull, but we yet to have the weather in 2013. It rained again today.

Interestingly, my earliest ever sighting of a Greenstreak was in Scotland way back in the 1980s. I was based at Aberdeen then and recall a hike up a hill in Deeside to the west of the city. (Hill of Fare). I think the date was circa 8th April (certainly early April) when I encountered – to my great surprise – a Greenstreak about 400 metres above sea level.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 08-May-13 07:24 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

I was on the Isle of Arran for a two week geology field trip in early/mid April in 1981 or 1982. It was scorchio for the entire fortnight and the island was

covered in Green Hairstreaks. I have such happy memories of the place that I really must return one day. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

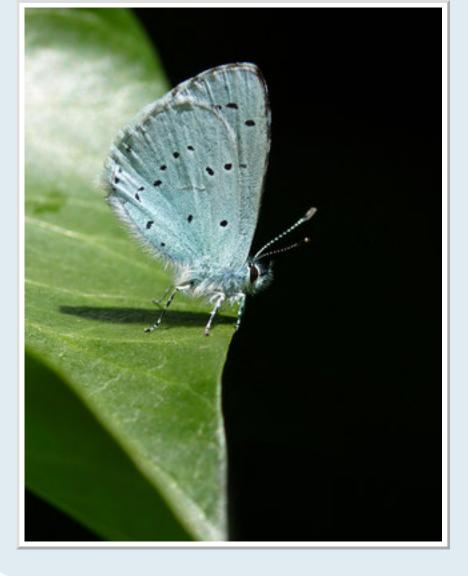
by Neil Hulme, 08-May-13 08:09 PM GMT

Blues Festival

The last couple of days (7th & 8th May) has seen a good emergence of Holly Blues in my Worthing back garden. Both the dining room and kitchen overlook the ivy-clad walls and trellis, so it's easy to keep an eye on activity. The 5 or 6 butterflies which have recently appeared have been a mixture of males and females and there has been much territorial and courtship behaviour to keep me entertained. I haven't managed an open wing shot yet, or indeed a pairing, with the latter apparently taking place (twice) in the jungle of ivy and clematis on the garage roof.







by Padfield, 08-May-13 08:29 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Hi Jack,

I was on the Isle of Arran for a two week geology field trip in early/mid April in 1981 or 1982.

Funnily enough, I was on the Isle of Arran for a two-week geology field trip in April 1984. Fossilised lightning strikes, giant millipedes, golden eagles and excellent Guiness - I bet we have some shared memories, Kipper! I still have my hammer, goggles and 10x hand lens for my return trip, so maybe I'll see you there.

Guy

Re: Sussex Kipper

by essexbuzzard, 08-May-13 10:41 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Your Greenstreak news is very uplifting! I an desperate to see some Greens this year. I only saw two last year, and none in Essex, despite searching at sites where i've seen them other years.

Hopefully the Green revival will spread here too.

Cheers!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 08-May-13 11:08 PM GMT

I hope that the upturn in the fortunes of the Green Hairstreaks is felt elsewhere, at Martin Down in particular 🨉



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 09-May-13 07:36 AM GMT

Hi essexbuzzard and Wurzel,

I'm hopeful that the Greenies are going to do well on your patch. I'm hearing good reports from further afield; e.g. the account of at least 40 at Rodborough Common by Simon Primrose, via the new Duke of Burgundy blog at http://hamearislucina.blogspot.co.uk/. Following Dave Browne's (Buchan Boy's) posting on page 2 of 'May 2013', where he mentions "30-40" very early in the flight period at Devils Dyke (north of Brighton), I suspect that a survey around the base of the Dyke and the path towards Poynings would reveal industrial quantities of Green Hairstreak.

Hi Guy,

"Fossilised lightning strikes, giant millipedes, golden eagles and excellent Guiness - I bet we have some shared memories, Kipper!". Oh yes. Waves of nostalgia! I remember mucking around in Glen Sannox (supposedly mapping the geology) and late night shenanigans outside the Corrie Hotel.

Best Wishes, Neil

by edgueinart, 09-May-13 11:36 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

I live in Brighton and I would love to see some Green hairstreaks.

Where is the place you mention, sorry but I dont know the area very well.

Thank you

Regards

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Senior, 09-May-13 12:25 PM GMT

Hi Neil, hope you are well.

We should of course note that all these Green Hairstreaks we are seeing this year came from eggs laid last year when they were supposed to have had a terrible year. I do wonder whether they were still about whilst we were hiding from the rain indoors.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 09-May-13 09:29 PM GMT

Duking

Today (9th May) I started off at Rewell Wood, where I hoped to confirm that the Pearl-bordered Fritillary has finally started to emerge, particularly as I'm running a third guided walk here this coming Sunday (12th May) at 2 pm (see http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/events.html); all are welcome. I was mightily relieved to spot a freshly emerged male quite quickly. I then received a phone call from Mark Colvin who had found a male Duke of Burgundy in a nearby woodland on the Norfolk Estate. It wasn't keen on flying in the strong, cool breeze, so it kindly waited for 30 minutes while I drove there. In fact it was so docile that I picked it up for a good close look at my equal favourite butterfly.

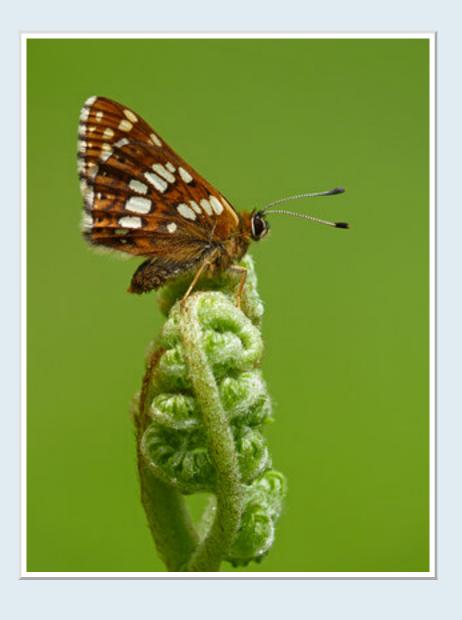




Image by Mark Colvin

I then headed off to Heyshott Escarpment where the emergence is well underway. The wind was now very strong and increasing, conditions which the Duke of Burgundy hates. Despite this I managed to locate 4 very fresh males, all showing that lovely blue lustre which typifies a newly minted Duke. These were the only butterflies brave enough to be out on the slopes, although I found an obliging male Orange Tip in the lane leading to the reserve.





by Neil Hulme, 10-May-13 08:00 PM GMT

Hi edgueinart,

This is Devils Dyke http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/devils-dyke/, just a few miles north of Brighton. Walk to the base and look around the scrub. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 10-May-13 08:06 PM GMT

Lovely photos, Neil.

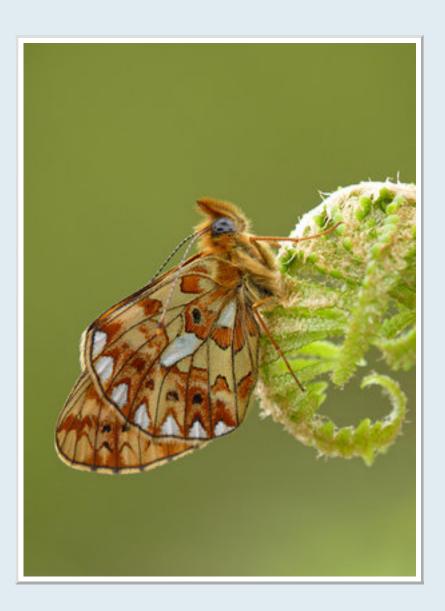
Thanks for running an extra walk. I hope to be there on Sunday with one or more of the kiddies in tow.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-May-13 08:28 PM GMT

Pearls On The Radio

This morning (10th May) I met Tom Feilden, BBC Science Correspondent for the 'Today' programme, to record a short piece on the conservation of butterflies on the Norfolk Estate. I believe this will form part of a wider broadcast involving other contributors, including RSPB and Plantlife. I marked the position of a roosting Pearl-bordered Fritillary before the others arrived and the cool, overcast conditions ensured it stayed put. It might still be there now!



Then it was onwards to meet a National Park ranger to look at some work being done on a farm near Upwaltham. One of the areas we looked at really should have Duke of Burgundy on it. Perhaps one day it will. The view from the top of the Downs here was breathtaking.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 10-May-13 08:43 PM GMT

I marked the position of a roosting Pearl-bordered Fritillary before the others arrived and the cool, overcast conditions ensured it stayed put. It might still be there now!

Fast rewind 53 weeks for the same.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 11-May-13 06:39 AM GMT

Hi Jack,

I've got to keep my customers happy - it's all about the 7Ps. Proper Planning and Preparation Prevents ... Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 11-May-13 08:16 AM GMT

I've got to keep my customers happy - it's all about the 7Ps. Proper Planning and Preparation Prevents ...

I had always thought that the Seven Ps was military in origin but obviously I was wrong.

No doubt there will be those who are in the dark about the other three Ps. Send me a Private Message if you require elucidation 😧 Jack



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 12-May-13 08:08 AM GMT

First Duchess

Yesterday (11th May) I met up with Charlie Elder, author of 'While Flocks Last' (2009), an account of his quest to see all of Britain's endangered (Red List) birds. Charlie had travelled up from Devon, specifically to see the Duke of Burgundy, despite a highly dodgy weather forecast. When I set off from Worthing it was still raining, but by the time I approached Heyshott Escarpment via the familiar country lanes, the sun had appeared and it seemed a little less windy than of late. We spend a very enjoyable few hours on the slopes chatting about butterflies, and specifically the problems facing the Duke. It will come as no surprise to learn that this species will make an appearance in Charlie's next book. It sounds like a very interesting project, but I shall say no more than that. His first effort got excellent reviews.

We had only seen an Orange Tip and Green-veined White on the way up to the reserve, but soon after 11.30 am the first Duke appeared. Closer examination showed this to be my first Duchess of the year, with a fat abdomen bulging with as-yet-unfertilised eggs. We soon started to find more, including a second female. One pair of males provided my first clash of the season, but they didn't ascend to any great height given the gusty conditions. It was over all too quickly as the clouds rolled in, but I think Charlie returned to Devon with a smile on his face.





ke: Sussex kipper

by Goldie M, 12-May-13 04:07 PM GMT

Great Pictures , I'm hoping the Duke 's up at Gaits Barrow will soon come , nothing yet thoughGoldie $\overline{m{v}}$



Re: Sussex Kipper

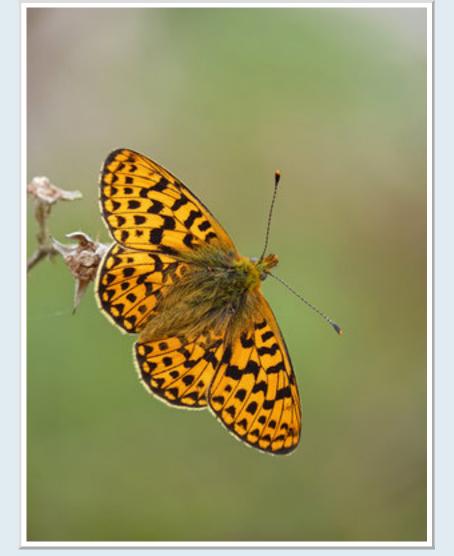
by Neil Hulme, 13-May-13 07:59 AM GMT

Pearls Part 3

Yesterday (12th May) I spent more than 6 hours in Rewell Wood, and only left as it started to rain. I spent the morning with a dozen South Downs National Park volunteers, showing them the end result of their winter labours. These folk make a vital contribution to the habitat management work done for our butterflies and moths in Sussex and Hampshire, so it was nice to put some of this into context. The sun shone and the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries (PBF) performed well. The efforts of the SDNPA volunteers are most appreciated, both by Butterfly Conservation and the butterflies themselves.

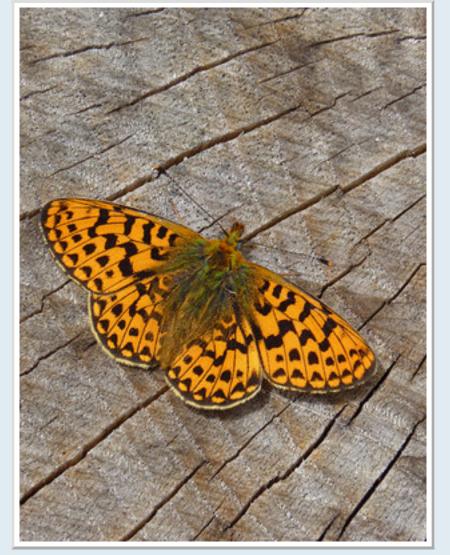
In the afternoon I met up with 24 faithful butterfly-watchers who had not given up hope of seeing PBF in Rewell Wood this year! After two premature visits I was getting a little worried about the weather forecast (torrential rain), having hastily added a third walk to the calendar. In the end the weather was just good enough for us to see a couple, both in flight and at roost, both open and closed.

The tally for the entire day was Pearl-bordered Fritillary (12), Grizzled Skipper (1), Orange Tip (4) including a mating pair, Green-veined White (1), Speckled Wood (1), Brimstone (1) and Peacock (1). Colin Knight also managed to tame a Green Tiger Beetle for us to observe up close.















by Nick Broomer, 13-May-13 01:11 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the P.B.F. Neil.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 13-May-13 08:41 PM GMT

Many thanks Nick. Certainly a very beautiful species and quite obliging when the weather is mixed. Best Wishes, Neil

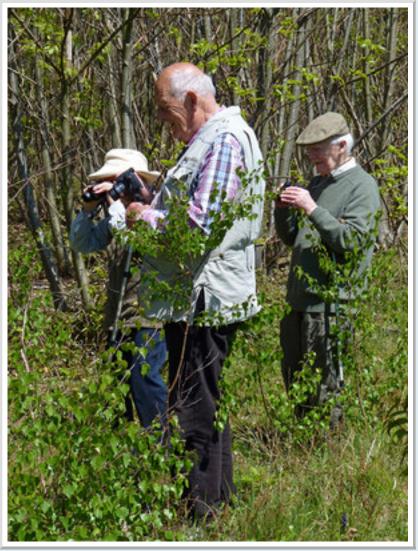
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-May-13 11:23 PM GMT

200 Years Of Butterflying

Today (16th May) was one of those days I won't forget, spent in great company, under clear blue skies and with butterflies aplenty. I started quite early at Rewell Wood and counted 45 Pearl-bordered Fritillary (all male) over three areas. Other species seen included Grizzled Skipper, Speckled Wood and Green-veined White. Then it was off to meet my father, Major Reg Trench and his lovely wife Sophie. Reg's youthful enthusiasm for butterflies has never diminished and he is nothing short of amazing for a man approaching 93! I'm not sure when Sophie first started looking at butterflies, but I calculated that Reg, my father and I have collectively been doing so for 200 years! We searched the northern part of the wood but only found a few commoner species, so headed south to enjoy the Pearls.

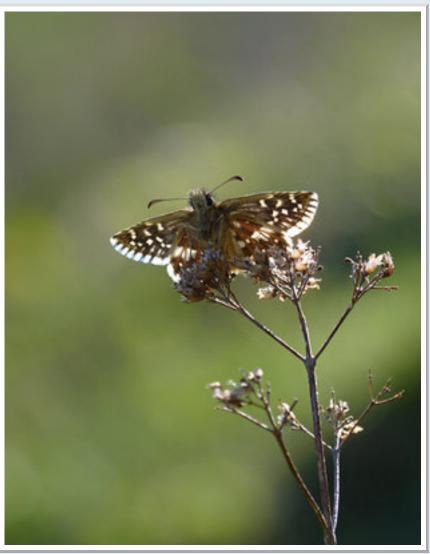
Later in the day I visited Springhead Hill, where the Duke of Burgundy has now emerged. 4 fresh males were on show, along with the odd Dingy Skipper, Red Admiral, Brimstone and Orange Tip. I then met up with BC Sussex Chair Nigel Symington at Chantry Hill, where we traversed several steep slopes in pursuit of the numerous Grizzled and Dingy Skippers.



Sophie & Major Reg Trench with my father (foreground)



Springhead Duke



Grizzled prepares to roost

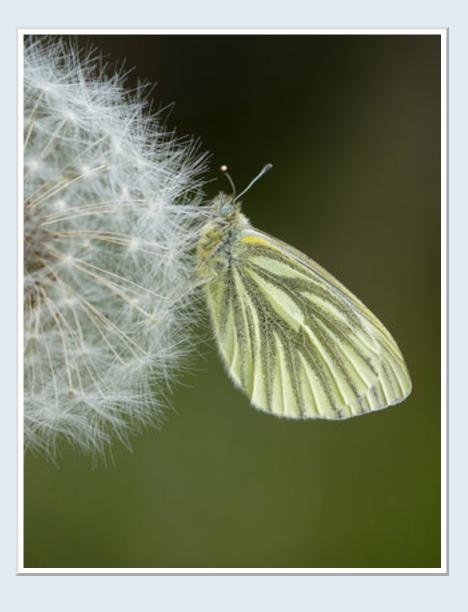
by Neil Hulme, 17-May-13 11:40 PM GMT

Way Out West

Today (17th May) I planned to take a look at a Duke of Burgundy colony in the far west of West Sussex, near the village of North Marden. Just before setting off I was having a late breakfast in the dining room, when I noticed a flash of blue on the *Fatsia japonica* in our back garden. A female Holly Blue was sitting on one of the lower leaves with her wings wide open. How often do they do that? I rushed outside just in time to miss her as she flew onto the garage roof. She taunted me by opening her wings again, while perched on a clematis bud. In a flash I was onto the dustbin, along the wall and onto the roof, risking life and limb, just as she dropped back into the garden. By the time I was down she had returned to her original perch, and had opened her wings yet again, allowing me the best opportunity I've ever had to observe and photograph the upper side of a first brood female ... a great start to the day!



By the time I reached the Duke site the weather had become very patchy and long periods of cool, cloudy conditions made for slow going. I counted 6 Dukes; they have clearly only just started here. Other species included Grizzled and Dingy Skipper, Orange Tip, Brimstone, Peacock and an obliging Green-veined White which settled on a dandelion clock when the sun disappeared. Moth sightings included Drab Looper and the elegant Plume *Adaina microdactyla*. During the quieter periods I enjoyed the abundance of spring flowers and heady aroma of ramsons which carpeted areas of recently coppiced woodland. I wish we could hang on to May for at least six months.







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-May-13 10:55 AM GMT

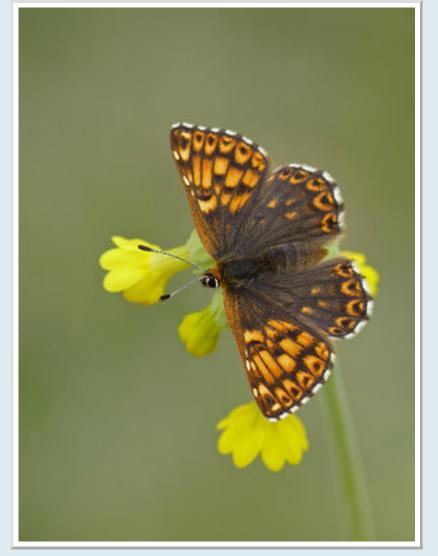
Save Our Butterflies Week

The local launch of Save Our Butterflies Week (18th May) was a great success in Sussex. The event at Heyshott Escarpment, which I co-led with Mike Edwards of the Murray Downland Trust, was blessed with sunshine, which was certainly preferable to the complete cloud cover forecast up until that morning. It seems we are always lucky here! I would like to think that the 37 people who attended went away with some happy memories of the day; Heyshott certainly performed well and there were a few surprises in store for us, including hotdogs (thanks MDT).

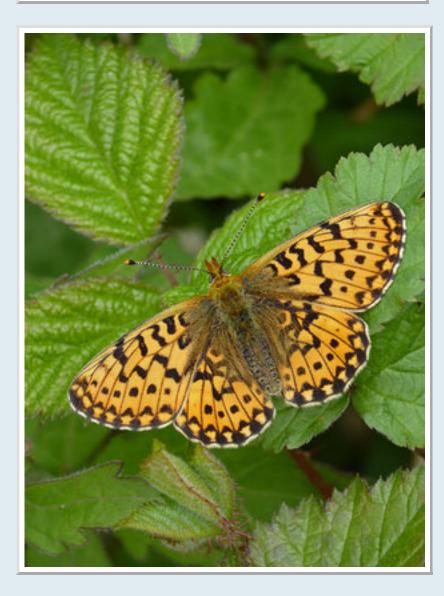
During the walk itself we saw between 20 and 30 Duke of Burgundy without trying too hard. I later returned to scour the entire reserve and came up with a total of 42 (including 3 females) after a couple of hours. With the season still running late the supporting cast was quite limited, but included Dingy Skipper (21), Grizzled Skipper (2), Brimstone (3), Green-veined White (2) and Orange Tip (1).

However, the biggest surprise of the day left me speechless – some would say a rare condition for me. As we entered one of the lower pits a pristine Pearl-bordered Fritillary flopped down in front of me. I could barely believe my eyes, later confirming it as a male. After the walk I was in the same pit with Susie Milbank, when we saw a female PBF emerge from the scrub on damp wings. This was her first, rather wobbly flight. This species was undoubtedly emerging on site. And to think I had experienced all those problems finding PBF on the Rewell walks!

Colin Pratt, the County Recorder, informs me that they were last recorded in this area back in the 1990s, and that they used to occur along the Downs here. So where did they come from? It is 11.5 Km to Rewell Wood, so if they did originate from here I would expect to find other satellite colonies somewhere between. I think it is more likely that an as yet undiscovered population exists just over the brow in Charlton Forest – there is certainly some good habitat there.







by Jack Harrison, 19-May-13 11:44 AM GMT

PBF - what a lovely find. As I have mentioned to you before Neil, (but maybe not everyone on ukb is aware), PBF used to be quite widespread in West Sussex in the early 1970s. I have happy memories of Ambersham Common and the white PBF I found there. Your find at Heyshott boosts my hopes the it still might be lingering in very low numbers in remote localities in West Sussex.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-May-13 10:05 PM GMT

Visit From Kent

While I was desperately trying to conjure up some Pearl-bordered Fritillaries for my Rewell Wood walks, I corresponded with Matthew Pugh who lives in Whitstable. Matthew relies on public transport to visit butterfly sites, which can make things difficult when it comes to being in the right place at the right time. He had not been able to make it over for my third walk, so I offered to collect him from Arundel station and show him some Pearls today (19th May). It's a long journey from the far side of Kent by train, so I was getting rather anxious about the leaden skies and steady rain. We trudged around a coppice block for quite some time before I came across a very sleepy Grizzled Skipper. Bearing in mind how rare they are in Rewell Wood, I couldn't believe I'd found one of these before a PBF! Eventually the cloud thinned sufficiently to permit a little warmth through and it wasn't long before Matthew was gazing at a 'lifer'. With excellent views of both topside and underside it was 'job done'. I was delighted that his journey had not been wasted.

Later in the afternoon I visited a private woodland in East Sussex, to help with a survey. One of the more important aspects of this work is to monitor a recent PBF re-introduction. I'm pleased to say that I spotted a couple of newly emerged females, in addition to a few males. This woodland supports a very strong population of Grizzled Skipper and they were around in good numbers, along with a few Dingy Skipper. I also saw the rare and very pretty moth *Anania funebris*. Despite the relatively poor weather throughout most of the day, I went home very pleased with what I'd seen.







by millerd, 19-May-13 11:57 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Visit From Kent

Bearing in mind how rare they are in Rewell Wood, I couldn't believe I'd found one of these before a PBF!

Lovely pictures, Neil, as always. I have visited Rewell Wood both in 2011 and 2012 (not yet this year) and seen and photographed (after a fashion!) Grizzled Skippers on both occasions. I didn't know they were scarce in this location.

Dave

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-May-13 07:16 AM GMT

Thanks Dave.

When I add the figures up at the end of the season, I will always have seen > 100 PBF for every Grizzled Skipper spotted. It's on that basis that I was surprised to find this little chap first. They do occur with some regularity, but only in ones and twos. The wood I visited later that afternoon can produce > 50 Grizzled Skipper on a good day.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pauline, 20-May-13 07:45 AM GMT

Lovely photos as usual Neil and great find with PBF.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Freeman, 20-May-13 08:11 PM GMT

Some beautiful images Neil and great to hear about the PBFs at Heyshott 🤝

Neil F.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 20-May-13 09:15 PM GMT

Boys' own stuff, Neil, but no more than you deserve given the patient hours you put in.

by Neil Hulme, 21-May-13 09:49 PM GMT

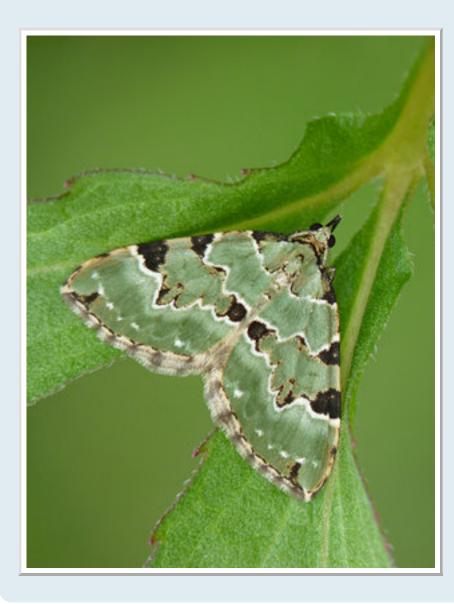
Thanks Pauline, Neil and David. Let's hope the PBF get a foot in the door here. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 21-May-13 10:01 PM GMT

Lovely Green Carpet

This afternoon (21st May) conditions in my part of Sussex were rather cool and gloomy, but that didn't stop me from heading to Springhead Hill in hope. This is a late site in a normal year, so it has barely started to produce this season. In terms of its condition, it's never looked better. The sunny spells forecast never materialised and nor did the butterflies, but I did disturb a few moths while chasing my daughter around the meadow. These included Burnet Companion, the longhorn *Nematopogon swammerdamella* and 3 beautiful, fresh Green Carpet.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-May-13 11:23 PM GMT

Botany Bay And Lord's Piece

Yesterday morning (22nd May) the weather wasn't good enough for monitoring Duke of Burgundy, so I headed to Botany Bay where I knew that Wood White would be easier to find, despite the cool and cloudy conditions. After crossing the concrete bridge over the stream it only took a couple of minutes to find one at roost. After a while I was joined by Mark Colvin, just as the sun started to break through the clouds. The improved conditions rapidly brought 6 or 7 more Wood White out of hiding and we watched the spectacular courtship ritual played out in a ride-side ditch. As is so often the case, the female was already mated; her suitor's best efforts were rejected.





In the evening I attended a walk on Lord's Piece near Bignor (West Sussex), to look at Field Cricket. Led by two of the county's finest naturalists, Mike Edwards and Bruce Middleton, on a beautiful evening, this free-of-charge event was attended by just ten people ... how odd!







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Colin Knight, 23-May-13 11:35 PM GMT

Fascinating, I'd have attended had I known about it.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 23-May-13 11:36 PM GMT

Neil, lovely reports and photos, as usual.

The report of your find of PBFs at Heyshott had my heart racing. Great news.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

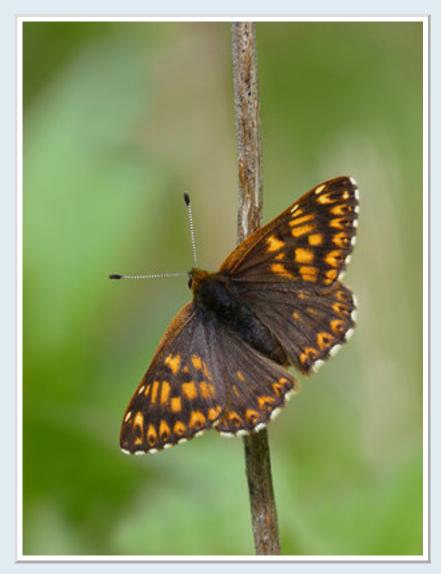
by Neil Hulme, 24-May-13 08:23 AM GMT

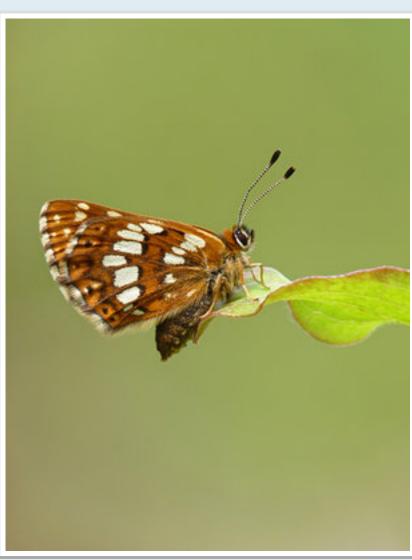
Thanks Lee. I was particularly pleased with the tongue-lashing shot.
BWs, Neil

by Neil Hulme, 24-May-13 08:44 AM GMT

Dukes And Blues

On Thursday (23rd May) I returned to Heyshott Escarpment, to lead a small gathering around the reserve. We spent a very enjoyable couple of hours on the slopes, until the sky turned angry and we were forced into retreat after a thorough soaking. Unfortunately, this meant that much of the reserve went unsurveyed. However, we still saw Duke of Burgundy (13), Pearl-bordered Fritillary (2), Dingy Skipper (15), Grizzled Skipper (3) and Small Heath (3).





As I neared home the sky started to show blue patches over the Downs behind Worthing, so I headed to Springhead Hill in the hope of some Small Blues. I wasn't disappointed, and was soon watching 8 of these delicate little beauties as they enjoyed the afternoon sun.







by Neil Hulme, 26-May-13 11:30 PM GMT

Counting Dukes

The last two days (25th & 26th May) have been pretty typical for me at this time of the year, involving a mad dash to try and survey all of the Sussex Duke of Burgundy sites as thoroughly as possible. Although numbers will take another season to recover, there does at least seem to be a viable population remaining in the areas I've visited so far; sometimes only just. That's quite a relief after last year's weather, but I do have doubts that the national tally will remain unaffected by the 2012 washout. I recorded 55 Dukes over 6 different sites and on some of these the butterfly is still emerging. Along the way I'm seeing reasonable numbers of Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak, although the Grizzled Skipper isn't faring quite so well. While searching an area of Rewell Wood today I saw 7 or 8 Drab Looper moths, so they seem to have weathered the storm quite well. These frail looking insects are a lot tougher than we give them credit for.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-13 09:54 AM GMT

Another Drab Day

Yet again it's overcast and damp outside, so I'll brighten things up with a recently taken shot of a Drab Looper from Rewell Wood. Θ OK, it's not the most attractive of moths, but I've come to love it, mainly because it often accompanies a woodland walk looking for Dukes or Pearls at this precious time of year. Tomorrow needs to be sunny.



by Mark Senior, 30-May-13 01:45 PM GMT

Hi Neil, hope you are well. Did you see on the Sussex BC website, the report of a Wood White at Sheffield Park. This is surely many miles from known Sussex localities for this species although last time I was there around 4/5 years ago I thought the habitat was very suitable.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-13 02:46 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

I'm hoping that the observer will return to photograph the species at this location. Until then the distribution map for Sussex must remain unchanged. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 30-May-13 07:06 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

I'm hoping that the observer will return to photograph the species at this location. Until then the distribution map for Sussex must remain unchanged.

Well said that man! The accuracy of our records is paramount, and know that some folks get very annoyed when I suggest that their record is suspect unless they have photographic evidence (the most angry chap was one who claimed to have seen a Large Blue near Nottingham!).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-May-13 07:41 PM GMT

Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood Reserves

Yesterday (29th May), during a brief visit to our Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood reserves, I counted 6 different Pearl-bordered Fritillary including a freshly emerged female. After disappearing for a few years it looks like the PBF is back to stay. Small Pearls are yet to emerge and may not show until the second week of June. Other butterflies included Grizzled Skipper (2), Small Heath (2), Green Hairstreak (1), Holly Blue (1), Large White (1) and Brimstone (1). This was my first visit since the winter and the place looks fantastic. Unfortunately the weather collapsed soon after I arrived, but I'll be back very soon.



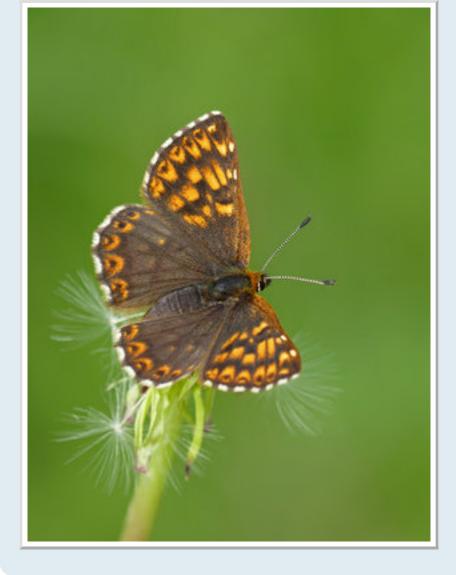
by Neil Hulme, 31-May-13 09:32 PM GMT

Dukes On The Wane

Sadly, the Duke of Burgundy season is now on the wane and my 2013 survey of all Sussex sites will probably be complete by the end of next week. However, there are still some highlights to be enjoyed, such as the count of 9 males at Harting Down this morning (31st May); none were seen here last year. This site is mountain goat territory, and very seldom visited by anyone else, so it's a great place to escape from the crowds and just melt into the landscape. The views across the West Sussex/Hampshire border are spectacular; this morning they were enjoyed to the soundtrack of skylarks and a distant cuckoo.



After a disappointing count (2) at a private site, I headed to Heyshott Escarpment, where once again I was alone with the Dukes. Although I managed a healthy count of 18, including the beautiful female pictured, the numbers are now dropping off. The Duke is no longer the most common species on the slopes, overhauled by both Dingy Skipper (37) and Small Heath (46). The latter seems set for a good season. Other species included Pearl-bordered Fritillary (1), Green Hairstreak (3) and Grizzled Skipper (3). If you haven't had your fill of Dukes yet, get out there this weekend.



by Neil Hulme, 03-Jun-13 07:56 AM GMT

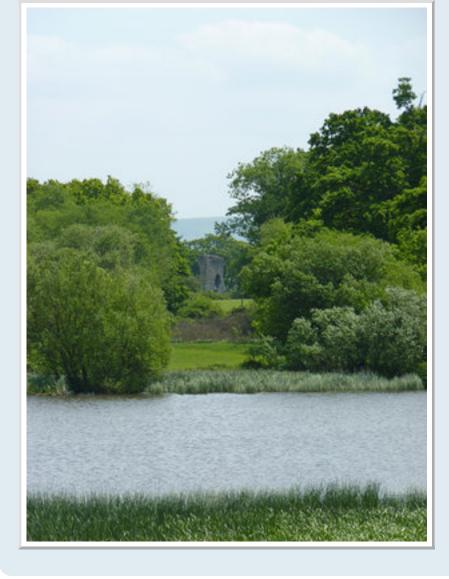
Floral Fringe Fair & Recorders Weekend

Large herds of free-roaming people joined the Longhorns, Tamworths, Exmoors, Fallow and Red Deer over the weekend (1st & 2nd June), as Sir Charlie Burrell's Knepp Castle Estate hosted both the Floral Fringe Fair and a Biological Recorders Weekend. I led a total of 4 guided walks and was ably assisted by Matthew Oates on the Sunday, who attended the event primarily to give a couple of talks celebrating his 50th year in pursuit of butterflies.

It was nice to see a couple of familiar faces, but most of the 100+ attendees had no particular passion for butterflies, or knowledge of Butterfly Conservation; hopefully a few will take their curiosity a little further. Butterflies were in quite short supply so close to the house, but we did manage to see Small Copper, Common Blue, Green-veined White and Peacock. The Recorders event (thanks to Penny Green) kindly supplied a few moths, so these provided some welcome 'insurance' and as always pleased the youngsters.

On the Saturday evening I returned to Knepp for the Recorders BBQ. Amongst others, it was great to finally meet up with butterfly charity walker/pan-species lister/birder/UKBer Gibster (a.k.a. Seth Gibson). After a moth walk around the Bothy and lake a handful of us jumped into Charlie's Pinzgauer off-road vehicle and headed out onto the Estate. At this time of year it is generally only the unpaired Nightingales which are particularly vocal and, as always, the experience of listening to them was heightened when other distractions are smothered by darkness. I've heard countless Nightingales before, but standing in this remote meadow illuminated only by starlight, while listening to this spectacular performance, was simply magical.





by leytonorient, 03-Jun-13 10:12 AM GMT

Upper Thames Branch [Dennis Dell, Berks/Bucks/Oxon] reporting for the 1st time!

Dukes are found only on downland in our region [with one isolated report from a Chiltern's wood this season]. The lower slopes of Ivinghoe Beacon are well managed by the National Trust [well done Matthew and colleagues!] and are species rich. It represents probably the best locality for the Duke in this region; numbers somewhat down compared with the best years: just 19 were recorded on the best day this year during the 3rd week in May. A private site on Lambourne Downs, Berks, is also excellent: about 20 were seen there yesterday.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jun-13 08:45 AM GMT

Hi Dennis,

Good to hear from you. You might also be interested in this http://hamearislucina.blogspot.co.uk/, run along similar lines to the Purple Empire. Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jun-13 09:30 AM GMT

Springhead Hill, 2nd June 2013

Both before and after attending the Floral Fringe Fair on Sunday, I managed to fit in an hour of butterflying at Springhead Hill. Much has changed here since Simon Mockford (South Downs National Park Authority, formerly SD Joint Committee) and I started managing the site back in 2005, and it is still improving today. Those who have visited this year will have noticed that we have cleared more deep hollows and trenches up by the car park, although it will take a couple of years (and a little help) for downland flora to become established over the scree. These areas will provide additional breeding habitat for Dukes and a protected roosting area for many of the butterflies on site, particularly the Small Blue. We're not finished yet and there are some more exciting plans in the pipeline. The only downside is, that by opening up the wonderful panoramic views of the Weald below, there has been a marked increase in dog fouling of this delicate and precious habitat, guaranteed to enrich and ultimately degrade the flower meadow.

Managing a site the size of a postage stamp does sometimes necessitate 'gardening'. Of course effective management for habitat specialist butterflies must be done on a landscape scale, but it is also important to occasionally focus on a small 'flagship' site such as this, which allows those with restricted mobility to access the very best chalk grassland butterflies without mountaineering or walking long distances. Trying to keep so many species (I've personally recorded 38) happy in less than a hectare is a tricky juggling act, but it's well worth the effort. I should point out that some of those species are only very occasional visitors to the site, and others occur in very low numbers.

During my visit I was pleased to see that Small Blue numbers are now increasing (22), the first Common Blues are emerging (3), and the Duke is still on the wing (1). Other species seen include Dingy Skipper (3), Grizzled Skipper (1), Holly Blue (1), Small Heath (3), Speckled Wood (1), Orange Tip (1), Brimstone (1), Large White (1) and Green-veined White (1).





Re: Sussex Kipper
by NickB, 04-Jun-13 10:47 AM GMT
Some nice pics indeed!

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jun-13 09:07 PM GMT

Thanks Nick. See you in a Northants Wood soon! Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jun-13 09:33 PM GMT

Grizzles Still Emerging

We may be into what many call the 'June Gap', a quiet period in the butterfly calendar in most years, but many spring species are still emerging. Yesterday (3rd June) I started off in woodland on the Norfolk Estate, where the Duke of Burgundy is still about in low numbers. This is an early site and all of the 4 individuals seen were old males nearing the end of their innings. However, most of the 6 Grizzled Skipper I saw were in mint condition. I was left in no doubt as to how fresh some of these were, when I noticed coffee coloured meconium fluid on the grass below a female butterfly. I also saw a newly hatched Dingy Skipper.





I then headed to the BC Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood reserves, for an unsuccessful hunt for Small Pearls with my daughter. While wandering around the woods we came across BC Sussex member and snake-charmer David Bradford, who was snapping away at a beautiful immature adder. At this point Mia insisted on being released from the backpack and became totally enthralled with her first snake. Later in the afternoon we also saw the famous PCH Black Adder, so now she's an expert.



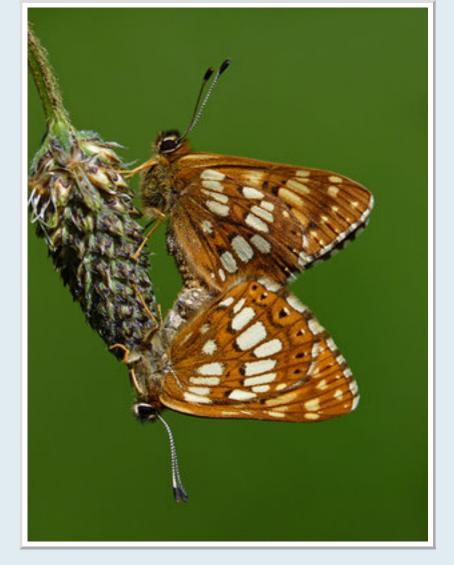


Re: Sussex Kipperby Neil Hulme, 05-Jun-13 07:39 AM GMT

Making Hay

The spell of warm, sunny weather we have enjoyed through late May and early June is fantastic news for some of our rarer spring species. Duke of Burgundy, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Wood White will all have had the opportunity to spend long periods out egg laying. As long as we don't see a summer drought, I'm optimistic that the numbers of these and other species will bounce back strongly next spring.

Although most Duke populations in Sussex peaked a week or more ago, the later sites on cool NW facing slopes are still producing freshly hatched females. Yesterday I counted 46 Dukes over three adjacent sites, including two mating pairs and a couple of females with only very minor wear & tear. Let's hope the egging continues for another week or more. We needed this.





by David M, 05-Jun-13 09:36 AM GMT

Some beautiful images again, Neil.

I've still yet to ever see a 'Duchess'. Where are the best places to look? I spent about an hour in the midst of the male leks at Rodborough Common yesterday but no joy. Surely the females must pop by occasionally otherwise the males would be rather wasting their time.

Totally agree with your comments regarding the weather. By the beginning of next week we'll have had 10 days of ideal conditions for mating, laying, etc. This surpasses anything we received in 2012 when I doubt we even went 7 days at any stage from April through to the end of August.

As you say, it augurs well for 2014.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pauline, 05-Jun-13 09:26 PM GMT

Love the Duke on the dandelion Neil and a few of the others aren't too bad either 📦 📦 🤤



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Jun-13 10:13 PM GMT

Thanks David. As far as tracking down a Duchess is concerned, the middle of an active lek is probably not a great place to look. Any virgin female that gets anywhere near a lek will be accosted in a very direct and discourteous manner - blink and you'll miss it. Better to look later in the afternoon in areas where suitable food plants are abundant, well away from the lekking areas. As males generally go to bed soon after 3 pm (the odd ones will

remain active later), females can go about their business with less hassle than earlier in the day. I regularly see them out egg-laying at 5 pm, particularly a little later in the season.

Thanks Pauline. I'm very trying.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 05-Jun-13 10:28 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil.

Info duly transferred to memory bank. 😃



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Jun-13 10:39 PM GMT

Dragons And Loopers

This morning (5th June) I started off at the northern end of Rewell Wood. Butterfly interest was limited, but I was delighted to see a Club-tailed Dragonfly munching flies.



I then met up with BC SE Regional Officer Dr Dan Hoare to look at a site where a South Downs National Park ranger believes he saw a Duke of Burgundy a few weeks back. Having looked at the habitat, I suspect he did. It's late in the season for Dukes now, so it came as no surprise when we failed to find any, but I'll be back to look again in early May next year.

We later headed to Heyshott Escarpment, where we counted 15 Dukes on the way to the summit. However, it was the wooded dip slope of Charlton Forest that we had really come to look at. We didn't find any of the undiscovered colonies of Pearl-bordered Fritillary or Duke of Burgundy we had hoped for, but we did chalk up an amazing tally of 31 Drab Looper moths, and as all Drab Looper fanatics know, that's a lot!



by Neil Hulme, 09-Jun-13 11:24 PM GMT

Farewell To The Duke

Yesterday (8th June) I performed my final 2013 count of Sussex Duke of Burgundy. For the ninth season in succession I have spent a great many hours surveying, monitoring and studying this species and, as in previous years, I would like to think that I have learned a little more about it. With 417 sightings logged, I'm pleased to report that on all Sussex sites His Grace survived the worst that the British weather could throw at him in 2012. Perhaps the best news of all is that the sun has shone brightly for more than two weeks, allowing the females an almost uninterrupted opportunity to lay eggs. 2014 could be a good year for the Duke.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jun-13 11:36 PM GMT

I so hope so,i sadly failed to catch up with the Duke this year, but good weather at the end of the season, when females are laying, will hopefully benefit this species.

Cheers!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-13 12:18 AM GMT

Evening Argus

I've been mightily impressed to see the way in which the Green Hairstreak has made such a spectacular comeback this season, following a pitiful showing in 2012. It seems that the Brown Argus and Common Blue are set to do the same, at least in Sussex. This evening I set off for Chantry Hill near Storrington, in the hope of finding some photogenic Brown Argus. It seems like a long time ago, far too long, that I last found large communal roosts of blues. As the sun finally dropped below the crest of the Downs I scrambled down a steep sided coombe to find both Brown Argus and Common Blue in abundance, alongside a few Small Copper, Dingy and Grizzled Skipper, all peacefully at roost. On such a beautiful, warm evening, without anyone else around or any man-made noise, I was soon as relaxed as they were. Even after putting the camera away I lingered for another hour.









by Maximus, 10-Jun-13 08:51 AM GMT

Hi Neil, stunning Brown Argus, I know what you mean about the peace away from any man made noise, we had just that in Scotland recently, good for the soul.

Regards, Mike

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 10-Jun-13 09:36 AM GMT

Peace and quiet! We went up a local hill in Scotland last night for the sunset at 2215 hours..



(Sorry Neil to use your diary but there is a little theme here of remoteness and peace)

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-13 07:19 PM GMT

Thanks Mike (Maximus). For a 'Little Brown Job' the Brown Argus is really rather spectacular, particularly if you catch it in the right light. No wonder it's Patrick Barkham's favourite.

Jack: No problem with you posting images like that in my diary – a beautiful, atmospheric shot. $\stackrel{ extstyle extst$



BWs, Neil

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-13 07:44 PM GMT

Roadside Blues

While on the way to our Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood Reserves on Sunday afternoon (9th June), I took the opportunity to visit the very convenient colony of Adonis Blue situated on a steep cutting beside the A27, a mile or so west of Lewes. This site was discovered a few years back by Michael Blencowe and Crispin Holloway and it's the most accessible Adonis population I know of! Only a few metres from the spacious layby, just to the west of the Jet garage, the butterflies can be viewed from the comfort of the pavement. Hardly a tranquil setting away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, but certainly worth a visit for anyone with mobility issues who finds it difficult getting out into the countryside.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pauline, 10-Jun-13 07:46 PM GMT

Neil, your Brown Argus is lovely, another species I have yet to see. I have been awaiting reports from the Sussex group on the state of Glanvilles on IOW. Did the trip go ahead and were many seen – or have I got the wrong date 😉 😉 My favourite tho is the Common Blues in 'Guy's style' as the background really adds that little bit extra.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-13 08:24 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline. Yes, I was thinking of Guy when I took the Padfieldesque 'butterflies in a landscape' shot!

Although I didn't go, the BC Sussex trip to IOW was apparently a great success. Half a dozen at Wheelers Bay and a couple of dozen at Compton Bay. Like everything else this year, they're slow off the mark.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Padfield, 10-Jun-13 08:40 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Yes, I was thinking of Guy when I took the Padfieldesque 'butterflies in a landscape' shot!

I appreciate the little nod in my direction, Kipper! 😊 That particular picture gave me a 'wish I were there' feeling ... Guy

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pauline, 10-Jun-13 09:06 PM GMT

Thanks for that update Neil. Half a dozen at Wheelers Bay sounds good to me . Might have to have a trip over there $\stackrel{f color}{=}$



by David M, 10-Jun-13 09:08 PM GMT

They're now out at Sand Point in Somerset, Pauline. First was seen on 6th June.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Matsukaze, 10-Jun-13 09:18 PM GMT

Brown Argus and Common Blue seem to be making a comeback in Somerset, as well. I've already seen more than I did in 2012. Small Copper hasn't recovered in the same way – I've yet to see any.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-13 10:27 PM GMT

Moths And Mysteries

Today (10th June) I visited the Graffham Down Reserve with Michael Blencowe of BC Sussex and Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT), to give habitat management advice to the Graffham Down Trust. The local volunteers do a marvellous job of looking after this beautiful stretch of downland, but once in a while it's a good idea to review the way things are done. During our tour Michael spotted this pristine male Privet Hawkmoth resting against a fence post. It's a real treat to see one of these leviathans in a more natural setting than a moth-trap!





After our meeting we headed to Graffham Common, recently acquired as a reserve by SWT. Michael was 'on a roll' and quickly spotted this batch of Emperor Moth larvae, caught in the act of hatching from an egg cluster.



However, the reason for our visit was to examine an intriguing crime scene. On Saturday (8th June) SWT ecologist Graeme Lyons made an outrageous discovery here, while performing a botanical survey. 2.5 miles from Heyshott Escarpment, where I recently spotted a couple of Pearl-bordered Fritillary, and a much greater distance from any known PBF colony, in a recently cleared conifer plantation with no violets, he discovered a female PBF being consumed by a Round-leaved Sundew!!! More detail and images can be found on Graeme's excellent blog at http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsus... pot.co.uk/. So now we know for sure – Pearl-bordered Fritillary is definitely wandering long distances through the Sussex landscape, many miles from established/known colonies. It is probably time to reassess our ideas on dispersal distance in this species. Perhaps it should come as no surprise, as we know for certain that male Chalkhill Blues can cover up to 18 miles in a matter of days. This is going to upset the conspiracy theorists!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Paul Harfield, 10-Jun-13 10:38 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote: Roadside Blues

While on the way to our Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood Reserves on Sunday afternoon (9th June), I took the opportunity to visit the very convenient colony of Adonis Blue situated on a steep cutting beside the A27, a mile or so west of Lewes. This site was discovered a few years back by Michael Blencowe and Crispin Holloway and it's the most accessible Adonis population I know of! Only a few metres from the spacious layby, just to the west of the Jet garage, the butterflies can be viewed from the comfort of the pavement. Hardly a tranquil setting away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, but certainly worth a visit for anyone with mobility issues who finds it difficult getting out into the countryside.

[attachment=0:1nppur8y]UKB Adonis female 1 A27 Lewes 9.6.13.jpg[/attachment:1nppur8y]

Hi Neil

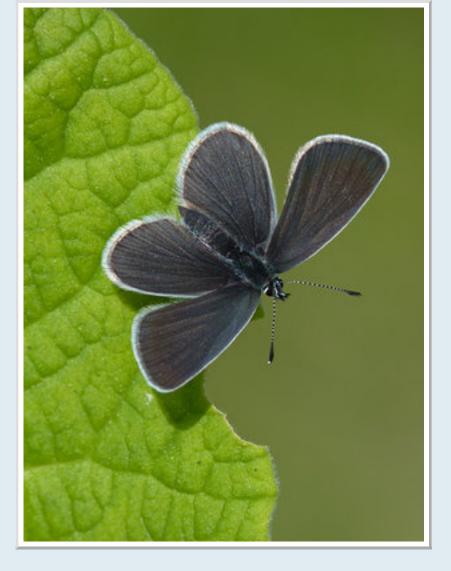
I regularly pass this spot, I also have yet to see Adonis Blues 🙁 Next time I am passing (hopefully soon) I shall certainly stop for a prolonged driving break 😉

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jun-13 11:49 PM GMT

Old Soldier

Later this afternoon (10th June) I stopped off at Springhead Hill, primarily to see how the Small Blue is faring. Numbers are much better than last year and females are still emerging, with two mating pairs seen.



What did surprise me, particularly so late in the day, was this geriatric male Duke, still taking on anything that crossed its airspace. The same individual was photographed a week ago, already looking bleached and well past its sell-by date. I'm pretty sure this is the same male I first saw eleven days prior to that, making it at least 2.5 weeks old. Good effort!



Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickB, 11-Jun-13 12:10 AM GMT

Yes – it is nice to have some idea of their life-span, especially with territorial males that you recognise in your local patch.

I once noted a large and brutish male CB that bullied anything that came near him for nearly 3 weeks; I called him *Arnie* things things onto a much more personal level – he's your friend!

(I remain hopeful to see you around the end of June - in a Northamptonshire wood, perhaps?)

Love the posts 🙂

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 11-Jun-13 11:05 AM GMT

Thanks Nick. I suspect that Graeme's PBF in a Sundew will be the most bizarre butterfly record of the year! It's also important in that it tells us a very interesting story.

See you in the secret wood.

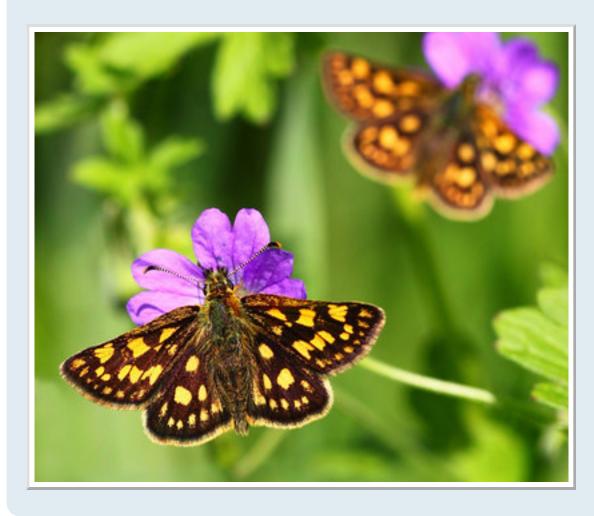
BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 11-Jun-13 03:46 PM GMT

Belgian Skippers

Here's a very nice image of Chequered Skippers taken by my brother Mark, not far from his Antwerp home. We could do with a few more of these between here and Glasdrum Wood!



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 11-Jun-13 04:06 PM GMT

It is bizarre that both Chequered Skipper (Antwerp) and Queen of Spain (Netherlands sand dunes) should occur so near to England yet are absent from England. There are no doubt other similar examples.

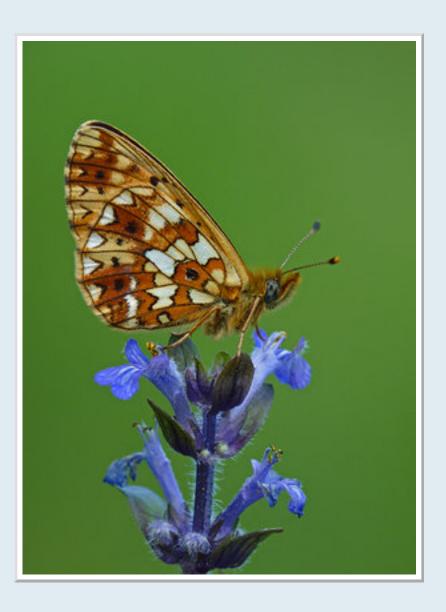
Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jun-13 08:23 AM GMT

Small Pearls At Last!

Just before heading north in search of the Mountain Ringlet, I managed to fit in an afternoon (14th June) at our Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood reserves, knowing that if I failed to see a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary in the perfect weather conditions, we might have reason to worry. As I walked to the PCH hut, expressing these sentiments to David Bradford, a male SPBF welcomed us. This will come as a great relief to us all, and particularly to those who have done such a marvellous job of managing and volunteering here over the years. The timing confirms that the butterfly season is still running 3 weeks late! We were soon joined by Reserves Manager Bob Foreman, but the butterfly remained elusive during his visit. At 6pm I found a second, freshly emerged SPBF in Rowland Wood. Also seen during my visit were Common Blue (1), Painted Lady (1), Red Admiral (1), Brimstone (2), Green-veined White (1), Small Heath (2) and Cream-spot Tiger (1).





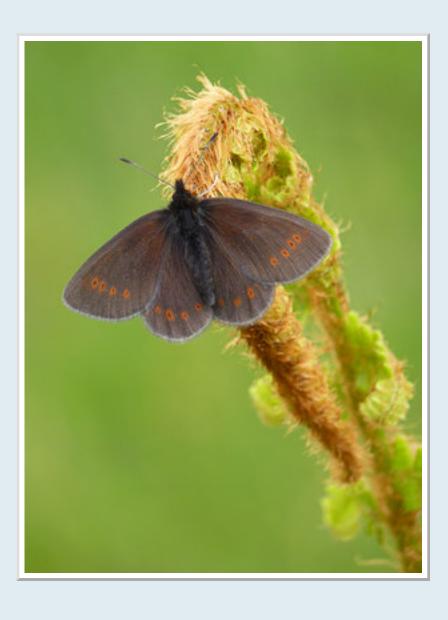
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jun-13 10:30 PM GMT

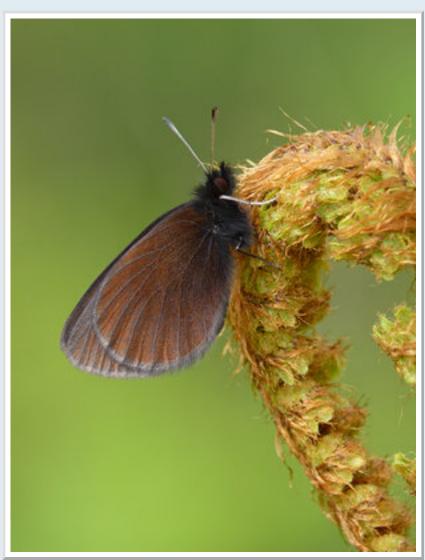
Lakes And Small Mountains

On Friday evening (14th June) the Met Office issued a weather forecast for Cumbria which was considerably better than those of previous days. After hastily arranging a hotel I packed a bag and set the alarm for 5am. As is usually the case in these circumstances, I failed to sleep properly, never having lost the excitement I felt in my youth when it comes to a butterfly adventure. It's a long slog up from the South Coast, but I was standing on Irton Fell soon after midday. The weather was rather frustrating, as the clear skies visible along the coast never reached sufficiently far inland to allow the sun's rays to heat the slope where I stood, waiting and hoping. After three hours the wind dropped, the temperature rose, and I was bathed in milky sunshine. A small, chocolate coloured butterfly whizzed passed me – the Mountain Ringlet was out! On this first afternoon I counted between 20 and 25 individuals, with about 50% being in excellent condition, and about 50% showing some wear and tear. Only a few females were on the wing.

I was even luckier on Sunday (16th June), as for the first few hours on the fell I enjoyed completely calm conditions; this must be rare. The bungled attempt of last year was finally forgotten as freshly emerged Ringlets appeared, climbing up through the grass to dry their wings. I surveyed a much larger area than the day before, counting 35 - 40 butterflies. The journey home seemed much shorter.











by Pete Eeles, 17-Jun-13 10:35 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil - and some of the best shots of Mountain Ringlet I've ever seen - nice job!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jun-13 10:41 PM GMT

Thanks Pete. I don't reckon on getting a better opportunity again! BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 17-Jun-13 10:51 PM GMT

The 'part-cloudy' might well have done you a favour, Neil.

Credit for risking the journey in the first place and I'm glad you were rewarded.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by MikeOxon, 17-Jun-13 11:53 PM GMT

Seems you had a splendid trip and excellent photos! Your experiences echoed mine of the year before – including a sleepless night before starting 😊



Re: Sussex Kipper

Mike

by Pauline, 18-Jun-13 08:46 AM GMT

Those are wonderful photographs Neil - so artistic as well. You have exceeded your own high standards. Having spent all that time and traveling costs it would have been dreadfully disappointing not to get the result you wanted.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lawts, 18-Jun-13 01:12 PM GMT

I'll post some of mine in the Sightings Neil, but I can tell you now they won't be a patch on yours. Excellent stuff.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by m_galathea, 18-Jun-13 01:23 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Lovely to read of your Mountain Ringlet success. I was above Langdale, not too far east of you on Saturday accompanied mainly by thin clouds and Small Heaths on the high ground... the sun did come out in to make a splendid evening, but not before I was back down in the dale.

All the best

Alexander Henderson

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-Jun-13 07:58 AM GMT

Hi Pete, David, Mike, Pauline, Steve and Alexander. Thanks for the comments - much appreciated.

Now for *artaxerxes.....* Should be fun given the weather forecast. I'd be up there today if I wasn't stuck in a radio station with no windows ⁽²⁾. BBC Sussex 2pm if you've got nothing better to listen to.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jun-13 10:06 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Great stuff Neil – and some of the best shots of Mountain Ringlet I've ever seen – nice job!

Cheers,

- Pete

Absolutely agree 😊



I am just catching up on some diaries and this post has hit me with the wow factor. Fantastic images and a great description of the knowledge and commitment that enables you to get them.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by The Annoying Czech, 22-Jun-13 02:54 PM GMT

This diary is pretty good photographically and sometimes very interesting (epiphron in the land of William Wallace 😊)



In CZE, the species thrives in alt. ca 1 200 - 1 500 beyond the forest limit (?! is that correct) and also flights a bit later - together with local and scarce E. sudetica

Lower it wouldn't have a single chance due to warm climate

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pete Eeles, 22-Jun-13 07:51 PM GMT

"The Annoying Czech" wrote:

beyond the forest limit (?! is that correct)

Almost ... we call it the "tree line" $\stackrel{\longleftarrow}{=}$



Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jun-13 08:40 AM GMT

Thanks Neil and Annoying Czech. More northern adventures coming soon. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jun-13 09:07 AM GMT

Artaxerxes Artaxerxes

Last week I made the long journey north in search of the Northern Brown Argus subspecies *artaxerxes*. It was way back in the 1980s, when I lived in Scotland, that I last saw this beautiful, white-spotted form, and that was long before I owned a camera. Inspired by Iain Leach's images of this butterfly I decided to retrace his steps and visit St Abb's Head, where of course there is much more to enjoy than just the NBA. The spectacular cliffs, noisy seabird colonies and flower meadows full of Northern Marsh Orchids will remain happy memories for a long while.

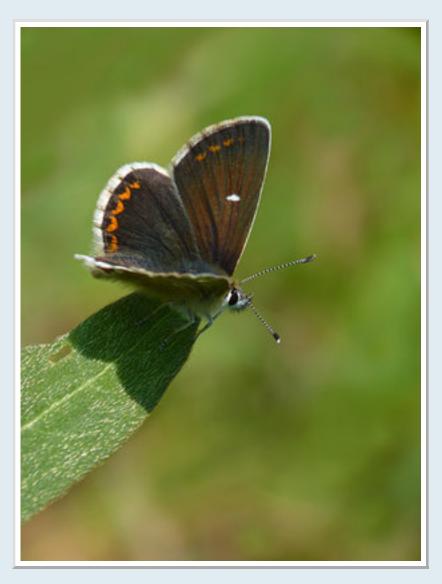
As always with butterflies, timing is everything. The full day I spent on site (20th June) was windy, but warm and sunny, particularly in the sheltered SE corner of Mire Loch, where I watched the species emerging in good numbers. In the morning, only single figures were present, but there were probably 20 males on the wing by late afternoon. Also seen were low numbers of Wall, Common Blue and Small Copper. Was the 900 mile drive worthwhile? Without a doubt!

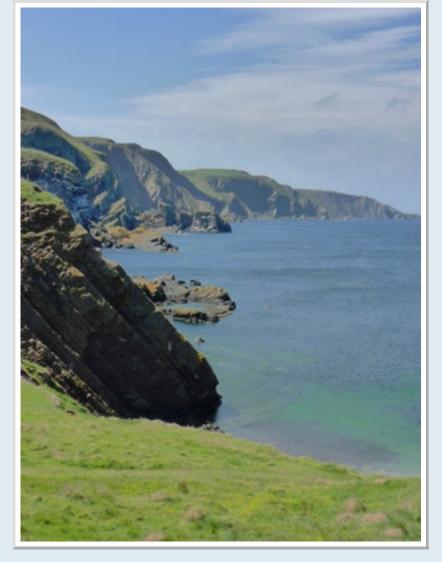
















by Jack Harrison, 24-Jun-13 09:24 AM GMT

Kipper

Was the 900 mile drive worthwhile? Without a doubt!

A PhotoShop session with a (southern) Brown Argus picture have saved 900 miles



(Super photos as always Neil)

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by MikeOxon, 24-Jun-13 11:18 AM GMT

A splendid series of photos, Neil 😊 I like the way you have caught the iridescent colour on the wings and, especially, the bronze colouration on the first photo.

Mike

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Trev Sawyer, 24-Jun-13 11:42 AM GMT

Ah Neil... 😇

That is the last butterfly on my British list left to do. I don't think I'll be in a position to do so this season, but at least I can stare at those wonderful photos.

Trev

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jun-13 11:46 AM GMT

Hi Jack,

I think people generally think of the white, upper side forewing spots as being the main feature differentiating artaxerxes from either subspecies salmacis (most) or the Southern Softie Brown Argus. However, I think the undersides look more different, with black 'pupils' being completely (or at least mainly) absent from the spots, leaving just white circles. I imagine this can also be achieved easily via PhotoShop, allowing an entire portfolio of shots from the armchair.

Thanks Mike. As with the Brown Argus, only a touch of lighting is required to turn a LBJ into a butterfly showing most colours of the rainbow.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jun-13 12:33 PM GMT

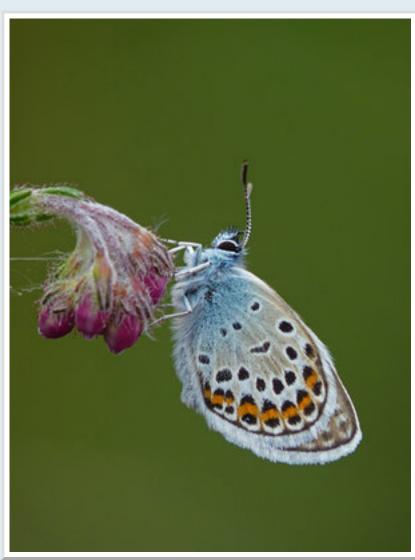
In Search Of Silver Studs

On Saturday (22nd June) six enthusiasts joined me in a search for the Silver-studded Blue on Lynchmere, Stanley and Marley Commons, just south of Haslemere. The species has not been recorded on Lynchmere or Stanley Commons for many years, although a female butterfly was photographed at Marley in 2012 by WSCC ecologist Ben Rainbow. Both the Lynchmere Society and National Trust are doing some excellent heathland restoration work, which will hopefully encourage the spread of this species. Following habitat management work, Silver-studded Blue numbers are now very good at Chapel Common, approximately 6 Km to the southwest.

Unfortunately we failed to find the butterfly, although this might be due to the fact that the season is still running several weeks late! SSB has only just started to emerge on the strong colonies at lower altitude (e.g. Iping and Stedham), so it might be another week before any appear here ... assuming they are present. An ideal opportunity for someone to do a bit of reconnaissance work and cover themselves in glory.

Undeterred by the now miserable weather conditions, most of us headed to Iping and Stedham Commons. A total of 6 Silver-studded Blue were located, including a nice female. Bearing in mind that this species can be found irrespective of the weather, Colin Knight's field outing here on Saturday 29th June (see http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/events.html) should be well worth attending, come rain or sunshine.







"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Was the 900 mile drive worthwhile? Without a doubt!

Great stuff Neil – I'm absolutely 😇 😇 😇 🐯



You've definitely given me itchy feet – must get out 🐸

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 24-Jun-13 01:54 PM GMT

undersides look more different, with black 'pupils' being completely (or at least mainly) absent from the spots, leaving just white circles. I imagine this can also be achieved easily via PhotoShop, allowing an entire portfolio of shots from the armchair.

These pictures show that underside difference very well. But to produce that effect with PhotoShop......it would be quicker to drive to St.Abb's Head.

I have seen the white spotted form only in NE Scotland and they were not as well marked as Neil's examples.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 24-Jun-13 05:46 PM GMT

Lovely shots again, Neil, and fair reward for your dedication.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-13 10:26 AM GMT

Thanks Pete and David,

It's a good feeling when significant time and expenditure is invested in a long-haul trip, and it then comes good. Looks like Pete did the same on Great Orme 😊 .

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

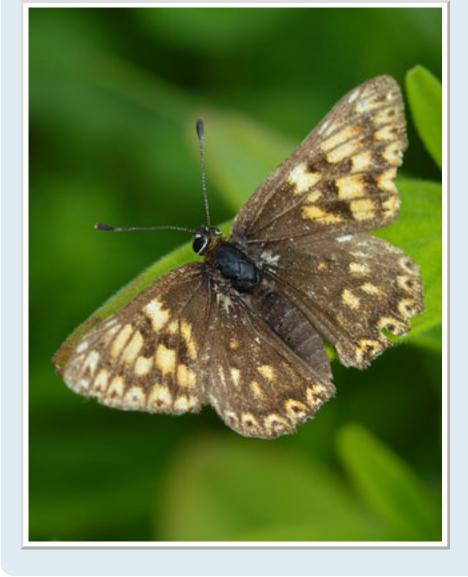
by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-13 10:32 AM GMT

Still Beating Skippers

All followers of His Grace the Duke of Burgundy will have enjoyed watching his attacks on Dingy and Grizzled Skippers on many occasions. However, it is far less often that we are afforded the privilege of watching him beat up the Large Skipper; in fact I only recall ever seeing this once before.

Yesterday (26th June), while surveying a site on the Downs at Storrington, I was only mildly surprised by the relative abundance of spring skippers still flying, bearing in mind how late this season is still running. I even saw Green Hairstreaks, although they weren't very green. What did surprise me was this feisty old Duke who, despite visibly falling to pieces, was attacking every one of the freshly emerged Large Skippers that crossed his territory. This butterfly wins my 'Duke of Burgundy of the Year Award'.

http://www.hamearislucina.blogspot.co.uk



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-13 11:24 AM GMT

Spring Meets Summer

Yesterday (26th June) I spent much of the day walking on the beautiful Downs at and around Chantry Hill near Storrington. I saw quite a few butterflies, although many of these were spring species which have persisted far longer into the season than normal, with the entire butterfly calendar still running 2–3 weeks later than last year. As a consequence many of these were faded and well past their best, including Dingy (21) and Grizzled Skipper (5), Green Hairstreak (1), and even a Duke of Burgundy! Later spring species included Common Blue (22), Brown Argus (18) and Small Heath (11).

My own definition of the start of summer was fulfilled with my first sightings of Meadow Brown (4). These were accompanied by equally fresh Large Skipper (14), and a range of other species including Brimstone (3), Large White (2), Speckled Wood (3), Small Tortoiseshell (2), Red Admiral (1) and Small Copper (2). Most of the 4 Painted Lady I saw were heading north in a determined manner, continuing the modest but steady migration that has been going on since mid June.

Perhaps most gratifying was the discovery of Small Blue (3) in a coombe at Chantry Hill, these being new arrivals and almost certainly the result of habitat management work performed by the SDNPA as part of the Nature Improvement Area project.







Brown Argus female



View towards Chantry Hill

by Jack Harrison, 27-Jun-13 02:06 PM GMT

Neil. You have recent photos of Northern BA and 'southern' BA in almost identical poses.



Excellent photos provide an excellent comparison. But it isn't quite comparing like with like. The Northern BA is a male, southern BA is a female. Am I correct that females of both species have more pronounced orange lunules on the forewings than do the males?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-13 06:18 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

Correct, although this is a particularly well marked female; hence I gave her a good going over.
BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-13 09:57 PM GMT

First Silver-washed

For a number of reasons the last few days have been rather turbulent, so here's a report from earlier in the week, which is out of sequence in my diary. A brief trip with my daughter to the southern end of Rewell Wood produced our first Silver-washed Fritillary and Large Skipper of the year, together with a few Common Blue and a very fresh Small Tortoiseshell.





by Mark Colvin, 28-Jun-13 12:18 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

I love that first shot of the pristine female Brown Argus; you can feel the breeze in her wings \dots

Good hunting.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jun-13 08:29 PM GMT

Thanks Mark. Looks like we were both at Iping/Stedham today! BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

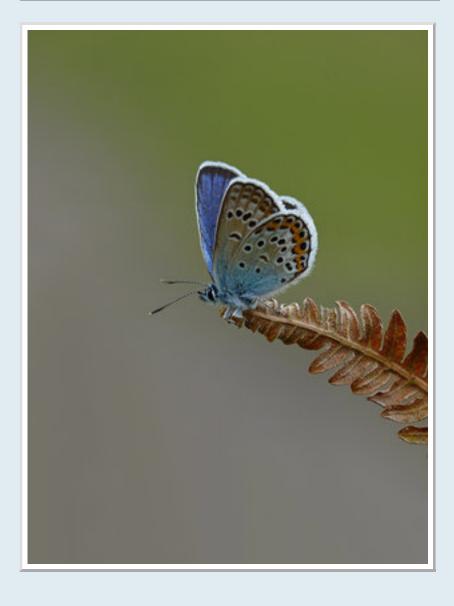
by Neil Hulme, 28-Jun-13 08:40 PM GMT

More Silver Studs

Today was pretty dark and dingy, and although these conditions are unhelpful when chasing most species, they are ideal for tracking down and photographing the Silver-studded Blue. This afternoon I walked over a large area of heathland at Iping and Stedham Commons, seeing about 40 in the process, including 5 females. I also spotted a fresh and very pretty Beautiful Yellow Underwing moth.











by David M, 28-Jun-13 09:30 PM GMT

Lovely shots as always, Neil.

Quick question. Do you think Lulworth Skippers will be about at Lulworth Cove in a week's time? I remember you saw them on 9th June last year at this site.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jun-13 09:43 PM GMT

Thanks David.

In answer to your question – yes, I reckon Lulworth Skipper must be out by then. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 28-Jun-13 09:46 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Thanks David.

In answer to your question - yes, I reckon Lulworth Skipper must be out by then.

Thanks, Neil.

You've just arranged my diary for 6/7 July. 😀



Re: Sussex Kipper

by MikeOxon, 29-Jun-13 11:58 AM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

this is a particularly well marked female

She really is a splendid example and superbly photographed $oldsymbol{\Theta}$



Mike

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Jun-13 10:31 PM GMT

Thanks Mike. She certainly had lovely lunules! 😊



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Jun-13 10:48 PM GMT

Day Of Firsts

BWs, Neil

This morning I visited Heyshott Escarpment with my father, primarily to photograph Greater Butterfly Orchid, of which we found nearly 20. The butterflies were far from great, comprising just a few very tired looking 'June Gap' species. However, the one specimen which did catch my eye was a very smart looking Ringlet; my first of the year. In the afternoon I headed to the BC Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood reserves with Dan Danahar. Although we failed to locate any Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, we did see our first White Admiral of the season. Large Skipper was one of the few other species seen.





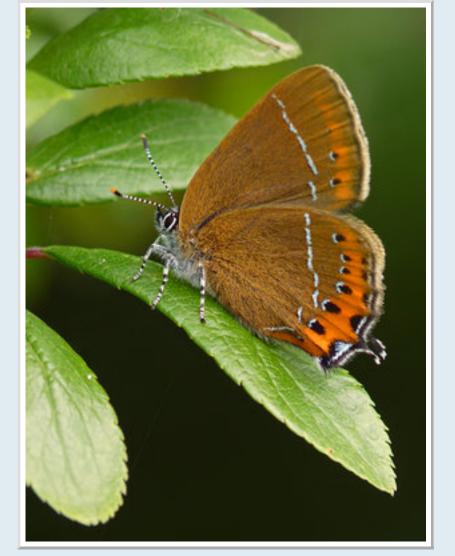


Re: Sussex Kipper

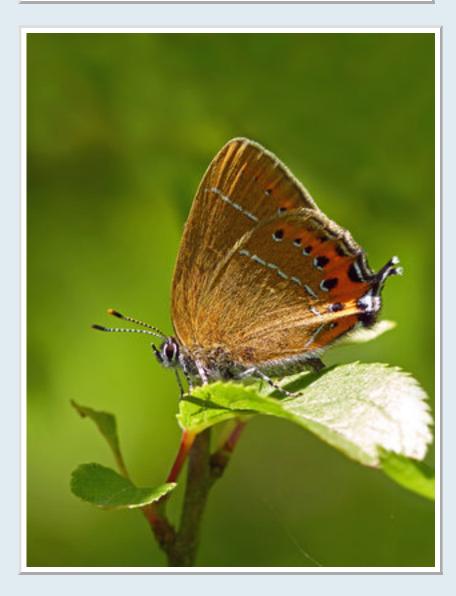
by Neil Hulme, 01-Jul-13 12:47 AM GMT

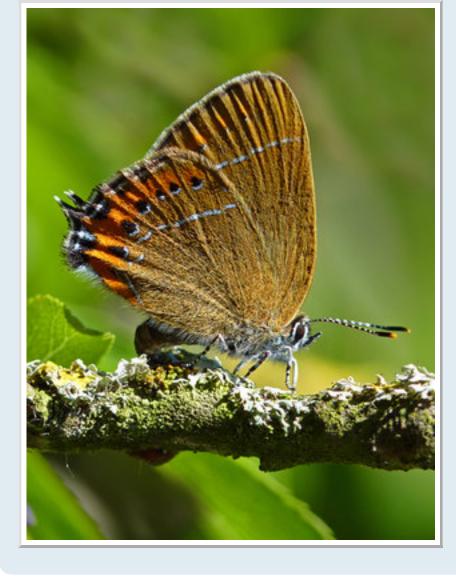
Pruni In Profusion

Today (30th June) I went in search of Black Hairstreak with BC Sussex buddy Dr Dan Danahar. We arrived at the M40 Compensation Area on the outskirts of Bernwood Forest shortly after 10am, and didn't leave until 6pm. Our plans to visit a number of sites in the area were soon shelved, as we realised that excellent opportunities were available here. We saw 7/8 male Black Hairstreak in the air simultaneously on more than one occasion, and reckon we saw 30 – 35 individuals across the site throughout the day, including 5 or 6 females. The last image in my sequence shows a female in the act of egg laying. To top off an excellent day we met a succession of lovely folk from all over the UK. My one regret is that I didn't quite pull off the potentially excellent shot of a pristine female sitting 7.5' up in a blackthorn thicket, while balanced on Dan's shoulders.









by David M, 01-Jul-13 11:27 AM GMT

Marvellous stuff, Neil.

Shame Bill and I arrived quite late at the compensation area. We spoke to another guy who said there was a better area further along but by this time it was gone 4.30pm and we didn't want to waste time wandering down yet another overgrown 'path'.

Seems like numbers are very good this year, which is encouraging given the poor weather during their flight period in 2012.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 01-Jul-13 12:59 PM GMT

Neil:

one regret is that I didn't quite pull off the potentially excellent shot of a pristine female sitting 7.5' up in a blackthorn thicket, while balanced on Dan's shoulders.

I have certainly thought of putting the camera on a monopod, holding it high and using a remote control. Remote controls cost less than a tenner. A flexi-angle screen would probably be essential (or clever use of a mirror).

The more I think about, the more it seems such a good idea. So about to order a remote.

Edit. Just ordered for a fiver inc delivery.

Thanks Neil for putting this idea back into my head.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mildheart, 01-Jul-13 05:47 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Apologies if this is mentioned elsewhere, but could you post some directions to the M40 Compensation Area please? I'm thinking of giving it a go this Friday.

Thanks

Clive

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-Jul-13 08:30 AM GMT

Hi Clive,

It's not easy! This was my first visit and I wouldn't recommend trying to get there the way we did, which involved the assistance of friendly local farmers. Go to the relevant UK Butterflies site page http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/sites_sq... pecies=All and click on the map for Bernwood Forest. Then head ESE from the car park, travelling through Oakley and Shabbington Woods, until you come up against the M40 (towards the lower part of the bend in the motorway shown on the map). I believe it takes 40/45 mins and holds the risk of getting lost if you don't have a good sense of direction. Good luck. BWs Neil

by Mildheart, 02-Jul-13 09:07 AM GMT

Hi Neil

Interesting, I had visions of being able to pull off the M40 and being right there! I may try Whitecross instead then if it is going to be that difficult to

Thanks for your help

Clive

Re: Sussex Kipper

by essexbuzzard, 03-Jul-13 11:11 PM GMT

Been to Greece on holiday and only just caught up with your diary-you have been busy!

Those NBA pictures are superb-i'm sooooo jealous!

Thanks for sharing 😛 .



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Jul-13 10:45 PM GMT

Golden Skippers

The Large Skipper has appeared in quite good numbers in Sussex this year, and it now appears that the Small Skipper might also do quite well. In the morning (5th July) I counted 25 of the former species in a ride at Rewell Wood (Arundel), where Ringlet numbers are also building nicely. In the afternoon I took a walk around Marlpost Wood (Southwater), finding about 20 Small Skipper (pictured) in a meadow full of Yorkshire Fog. In the early evening I stopped beside the A27 at Southwick to photograph the spectacular display of poppies. I know of several more areas along the Sussex Downs where poppies currently appear as huge red patches on the landscape.









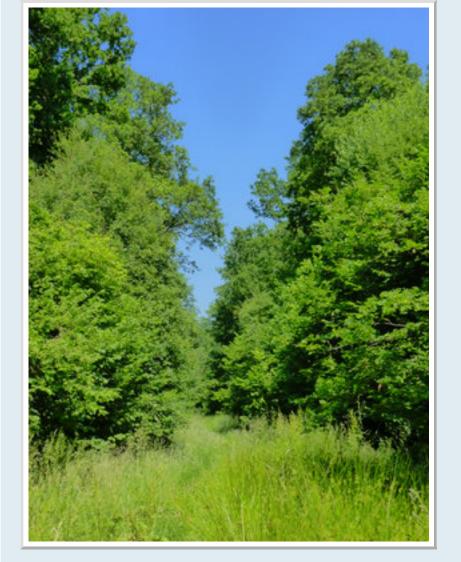
by Neil Hulme, 08-Jul-13 11:58 PM GMT

Alice Comes Alive

Today (8th July) our woodlands finally took on that different feel as butterfly royalty took to the air. Although I didn't see HIM, I did see Alice Holt Forest come to life. I spent many happy hours in the good company of Colin Knight and Mark Tutton (pleased to meet you at last!) in Straits Enclosure. As the temperature rose, more and more Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral and *hutchinsoni* Comma appeared, with numbers of all species at least doubling during the day. By 3pm butterflies were actively seeking shade under leaves, something I haven't seen for a while. Over the next couple of weeks I'll be using every excuse available (and plenty not) to avoid being anywhere else than our high summer woods.

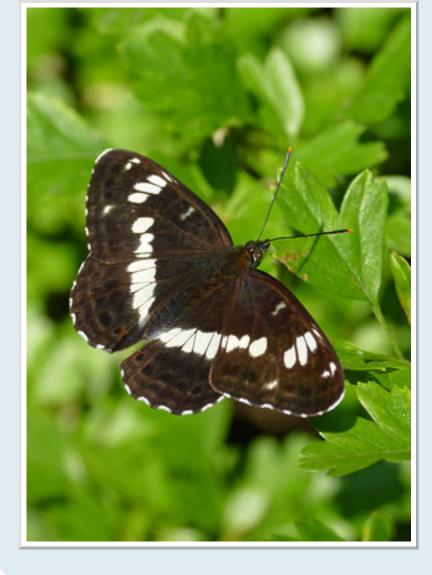












by Jack Harrison, 09-Jul-13 08:24 AM GMT

Who needs a DSLR? (stir)

The lower of the two SWF pictures. Artistically very effective but do thistles really grow upside down in Alice Holt?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 09-Jul-13 10:54 PM GMT

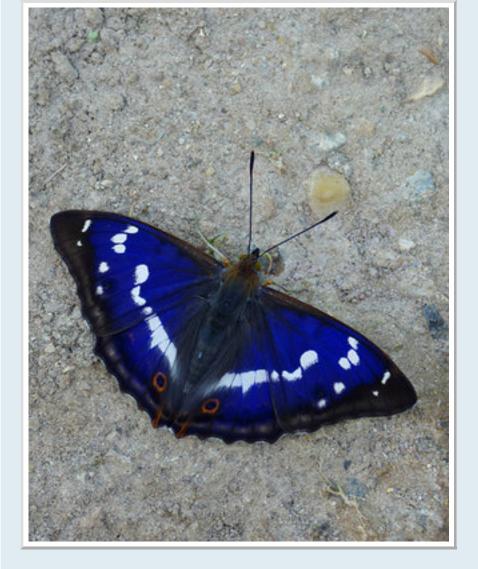
Thanks Jack. Yes the Alice Holt thistles grow in a partially contorted manner! That image is in its true orientation. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

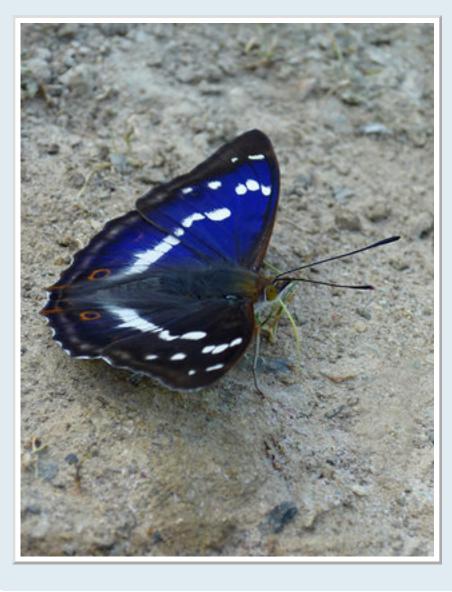
by Neil Hulme, 09-Jul-13 11:21 PM GMT

Botany Beauty

Today (9th July) I spent a very fruitful day in Botany Bay, where the afternoon heat ensured a lengthy siesta for the butterflies. During the morning and late afternoon at least 3 male Emperors showed, with one performing particularly well. Activity was centred on the main area of high ground, the Four Oaks Territory and the Triangle. The first male down was spotted by Peter Farrant at just past 11 am. By 11.10 am it was sitting in a sallow nearby, and it refused to budge again until late afternoon when the temperature started to moderate. Thereafter it became very active and spent more than an hour seeking out minerals along the main ride. On several occasions it fed on my belachan soup bait and allowed Nick Broomer, Paul Day and me some fabulous opportunities for photography. Although it initially sat 'edge on' to the sun so as to cast no tell–tale shadow, meaning that both sides were poorly illuminated, we worked out that the shadows thrown by some tall pines would soon reach out to the butterfly, as the sun continued to drop. Our patience was rewarded and within 15 minutes the light conditions became more favourable, eventually tempting him to open those beautiful wings for us. Needless to say, the three of us went home on Cloud Nine.







by Nick Broomer, 09-Jul-13 11:31 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

a brilliant day, with a brilliant finish with a brilliant photo.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jul-13 07:03 AM GMT

Hi Nick,

Butterflying doesn't get much better than that! It was great to share the moment with you and Paul. One to remember for a very long time. Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pauline, 10-Jul-13 08:01 AM GMT

I don't think you could expect or achieve a better result than that Neil. Must be the best I have seen so you can stop taking photos now and go home to put your feet up 📦 📦

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jul-13 08:20 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline.

"so you can stop taking photos now and go home to put your feet up"

Unfortunately the Purple Emperor is a highly addictive drug. I'll be out there looking within the hour.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 10-Jul-13 08:33 AM GMT

I have taken many PE photos where only ONE wing shows purple. So what is the trick to get both wings purple?

And do you have any references as to how the scales actually work to give that iridescent effect? It must be diffraction and/or splitting wavelengths in the manner of a prism. I wonder if experiments have been done in different lighting. For example, do PE's show that effect when *not* in direct sunlight?

This discussion obviously applies to Morphos (and indeed Purple Hairstreak) and others but being a PE expert Neil, you might be able to answer for His Lordship.

Finally, why has this effect evolved? To attract females? (Or simply to attract lepidopterists? 😉)



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jul-13 09:28 AM GMT

Hi Jack,

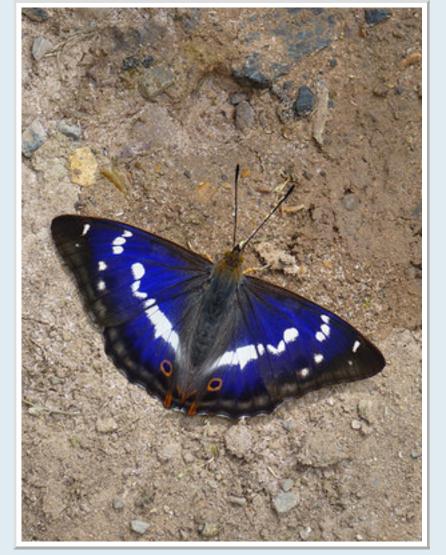
I know the answers, but they're quite complex to explain. A job for winter ... the sun is shining here!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 11-Jul-13 12:08 AM GMT

Another Good Day At Botany Bay

A quick change of plan this morning (10th July), as my father got a day pass from the Sturmbannführer, meaning that getting him close to a Purple Emperor was the order of the day. After vesterday's success it had to be a return match at Botany Bay. This proved to be a good decision as between 6 and 8 individual males came to ground repeatedly throughout the day, giving a great deal of pleasure to the numerous visitors. By 4 pm the cloud had moved in and under humid conditions we saw a change in behaviour, with the first evidence of active mate seeking, including determined sallowsearching and oak-edging around the Triangle area. Another great day amongst good friends and good butterflies - Botany Bay is performing well this year.

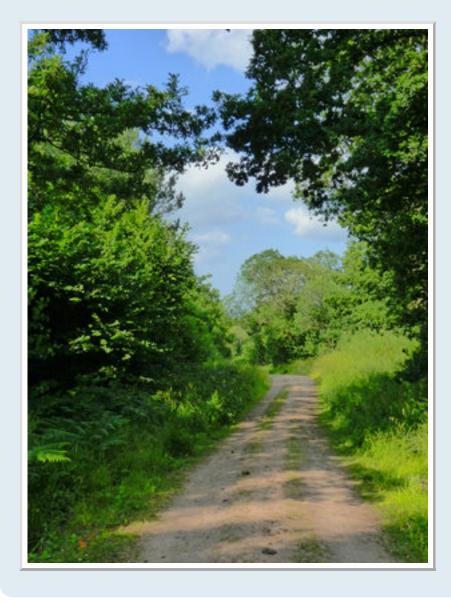












by CJB, 11-Jul-13 04:32 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Wow those are great shots of the PE's! 😇 😇



Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 12-Jul-13 10:06 PM GMT

Thanks CJB. If not before, see you amongst the Hairstreaks ... it's going to be a good year for them. 😊 Best Wishes, Neil



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Jul-13 07:17 AM GMT

Emperor Update

Having spent a few days just over the border, on Friday (12th July) I decided to look for Emperors closer to home, in a small, quiet wood near Billingshurst. The morning cloud cover was slow to clear, so I headed off to another site further west where the sun was already shining, leaving my parents to watch over a couple of belachan baits. I hadn't been at the second site for very long before I received a phone call informing me I was in the wrong place. Later that day I did catch up with the same butterfly my father had photographed in full purpleness, but only managed an underside shot. In the evening I found another male Emperor sitting on a pile of chalk aggregate.

On Saturday (13th July) I co-led a BC Sussex/Hants & IOW walk around Havant Thicket, with Ashley and Jackie Whitlock. 29 of us wandered around this well-managed site in sweltering heat, seeing a wide variety of species, but sadly no Emperors. We were more fortunate at Southleigh Forest on the county border, where 2 males put on a spectacular show for us. Last stop was the Brickkiln Ponds territory near Stansted House, where a single male crossed through the vista at c.3 pm. Thanks to Ashley, Jackie and all who attended.

On Sunday (14th July) it was back to Botany Bay, to lead an RSPB walk with Chris, Helen and Ellie Corrigan. 21 birders were treated to an impressive performance by the Purple One, with several participants seeing their first Emperor. Everyone got excellent views and one obliging male sat at headheight in a hazel, flashing purple every time I pushed a sweaty finger in his face. I stayed into the evening, finally leaving a very active male butterfly at 6.15 pm. At least 10 individual Emperors were seen across the site, with many coming to ground throughout the day. Thanks to the generosity of the RSPB walkers we raised £85 for conservation work by the Sussex Branch.



Billingshurst Emperor



Billingshurst Admiral



Botany Bay Emperor

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jul-13 07:31 AM GMT

Trouserings

I haven't washed my moleskin trousers since early June, and won't wash them again before August. As they have 'matured' in the current heat-wave they have become ever more appealing to His Imperial Majesty, until it now seems they are almost irresistible to his refined palate. Yesterday (15th July) I trousered my sixth and seventh Emperors of the season at Botany Bay, where they continue to descend in good numbers. The only downside is that my trousers seem to have taken on a life of their own; it takes me about ten minutes to catch them every morning.



Trousered Emperor

Later in the day I visited Southwater Woods, spotting a single male Emperor above the Marlpost Road car park. Mia *Iris* Hulme was treated to her first close encounter with her favourite butterfly, when a second male descended to fly in tight circles around her backpack.



Image by David Bradford

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 16-Jul-13 08:19 AM GMT

Happy Families!

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Lee Hurrell, 16-Jul-13 09:50 PM GMT

Lovely to see you on Sunday, Neil.

Stunning 4 wing PE shots! Good luck with those trousers...

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jul-13 10:50 PM GMT

You too Lee. Hope to catch up again soon. BWs, Neil

P.S. the trousers are running up and down the road outside.

Re: Sussex Kipper

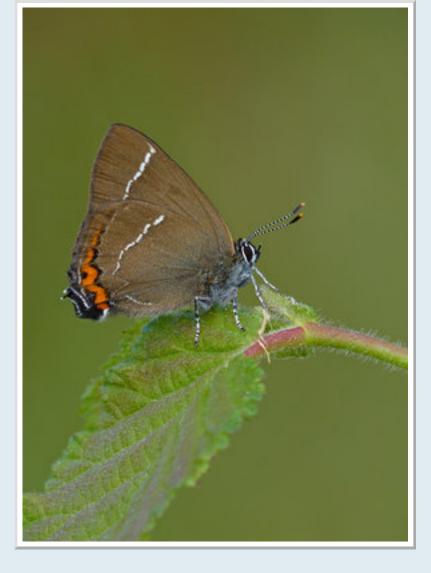
by Neil Hulme, 16-Jul-13 10:55 PM GMT

White-letters

Back-filling with some adventures earlier in the month, here are a few shots of the typically obliging White-letter Hairstreak, all taken in urban Cosham.







by Neil Hulme, 23-Jul-13 01:33 PM GMT

Catching Up (Part 1)

Finding time to keep my diary up-to-date has proven difficult of late, particularly as almost every July day has been sunny, meaning minimal time indoors. Even better, the Purple Emperor has been having an excellent season on most of the sites I've visited.

Wednesday 17th July: Back to Botany Bay where at least a dozen male and two female Purple Emperors were active. I trousered my eighth Emperor of the season. Some males were still emerging, with the very newest specimens showing that characteristic blotchiness over slightly damp wings.



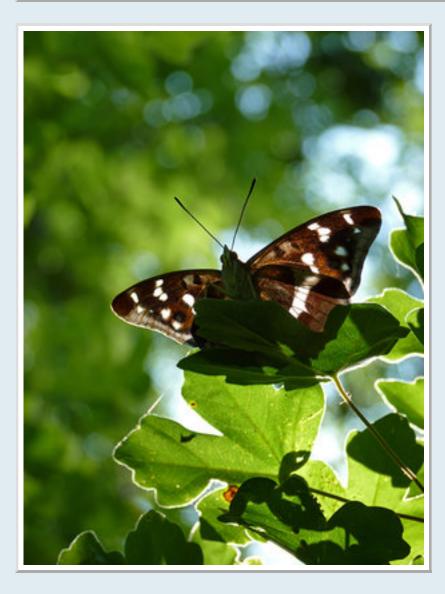
Botany Bay Emperor Patrol (image Colin Knight)

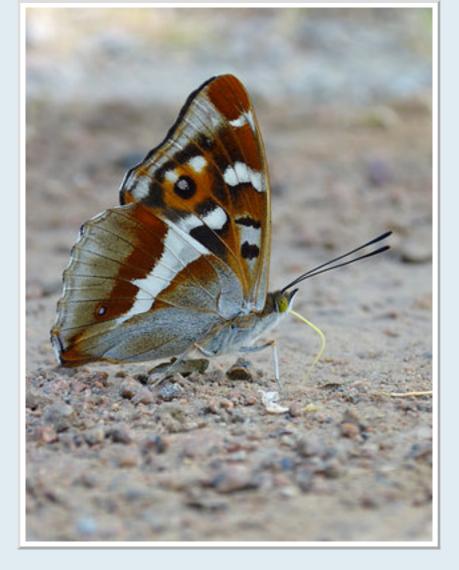
I then travelled on to Straits Inclosure (Alice Holt Forest), where activity was really quite subdued. I watched 3 males 'oak-edging' and a further specimen perched on the first deer watch tower.

Thursday 18th July: I travelled up to Fermyn Woods for the day, despite knowing that the 'Big Bang' was over for another year. Although the very best period had passed, and the morning session was steady rather than spectacular, I was still treated to a very generous evening flight in a forest now empty of people. By close of play I had seen between 60 and 70 Emperors; only half of what had been on offer over the preceding days, but more than enough to please anyone. I trousered another 3 specimens, breaking double figures for the season. Many thanks to Mark Joy for taking the shot of an Emperor on my rucksack.











by Neil Freeman, 23-Jul-13 07:17 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

It was good to finally meet you at Fermyn last Thursday 😇



It may have been quieter than Mondays and Tuesdays outstanding peak days but for Chris and myself it was a bit special, a great day as described in my diary.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Jul-13 09:07 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

It was great to meet you and Chris, particularly in such happy circumstances 😊 . It might have been quieter than Monday or Tuesday, but I think that any day in which even a single Emperor is seen must count as special. If not before, see you same time, same place next year. Best Wishes, Neil

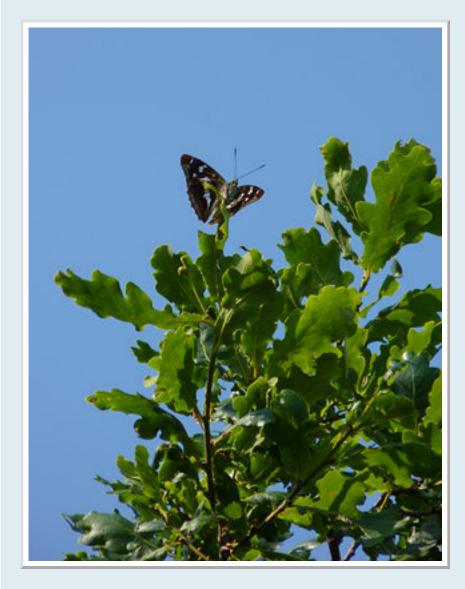
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 25-Jul-13 01:26 PM GMT

Catching Up (Part 2)

Friday 19th July: This was the day of the long awaited and carefully planned Big Butterfly Race, a competition between teams from BC Sussex and BC Hants & IOW, to celebrate the launch of the Big Butterfly Count. I won't write too much, as I believe an article will be appearing on UKB in due course. It was a fantastic event and keenly contested, with only the narrowest of margins separating the teams. With Messrs Oates, Willmott, Eeles and Hoare amongst a very impressive line-up on the opposing Team Glanville Fritillary, I didn't think we stood much chance. Highlights included excellent views of Purple Emperor and successful hunts for Small Blue larvae for both teams, but it was the raid on hanging baskets outside a pub for Large and Small White ova that carried the Sussex Wood Whites to victory. Congratulations to Dan Danahar for masterminding the event, which drew a great deal of media interest for an important cause.

Saturday & Sunday 20th & 21st July: I spent a couple of very exciting days in the field with Matthew Oates, surveying a large site somewhere in the depths of Sussex. We can't say too much at the moment, as the owner is out of the country, and would probably be a little miffed to find his land invaded by hordes of butterfly photographers on his return. We saw a very large number of Purple Emperors.



Wednesday 24th July: I started the morning at a beautiful, isolated spot just west of Petworth, where Michael Blencowe recently discovered a small colony of Purple Emperor. It didn't take long before I'd notched up a couple of males, so headed off to look (unsuccessfully) at other potential Emperor sites within Petwork Park. I'm sure they're in there somewhere, but the rarity of suitable sallow precludes a population of any size. In the afternoon I visited Springhead Hill on the Downs near Storrington. In the meadow and surrounding areas, covering less than a hectare, I recorded 24 species including Essex, Small and Large Skipper; Brimstone (newly emerged); Large, Small and Green-veined White; Small, Common, Chalkhill and Holly Blue; Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma; Dark Green and Silver-washed Fritillary; Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Small Heath. Best of all was a large Empress observed laying eggs from close quarters. A quick visit to Chantry Hill a couple of Km away confirmed the presence of approximately 50 Dark Green Fritillary, as recently reported by Dr Martin Kalaher. The recent change in grazing regime is clearly bringing spectacular results here.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-Aug-13 09:28 AM GMT

Abundance & Diversity

Abundance and diversity were words seldom used in the context of butterflies during the 2012 season, but it's remarkable just how quickly many species have recovered this year. Although Common Blue, Small Copper and White Admiral have been in short supply in Sussex this season, I witnessed an abundance and diversity of butterflies in the conservation meadow at Springhead Hill yesterday, where the situation looked healthier than for many years. An hour visit slowly turned into a four hour visit, as Colin Knight, Mark Colvin and I wandered through a stunning display of wild flowers and clouds of whites, blues and browns. Between us we collectively saw 28 species in this golden hectare, including Silver–spotted Skipper, Essex Skipper, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green–veined White, Small Copper, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Purple Emperor, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver–washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Small Heath.

The Silver-spotted Skipper discovered by Mark (Colin later found a female) is a significant find, representing another 1 Km shift westwards in the Sussex range of this species. The habitat isn't particularly suitable for it, so I imagine the colony will remain small and might be vulnerable to cool, damp summers. However, it does suggest to me that we should be searching better habitat to the west. Male and female Clouded Yellows, a stately Empress and some very large, fresh Painted Ladies were amongst the numerous highlights of a wonderful afternoon.

Later I visited Chantry Hill, a little way to the east. Butterflies were also seen in impressive numbers here, including about 20 Silver-spotted Skipper. A three-way chase between a male SSSk, Clouded Yellow and Dark Green Fritillary was a first for me. It's great to have a proper summer again!



SSSk male



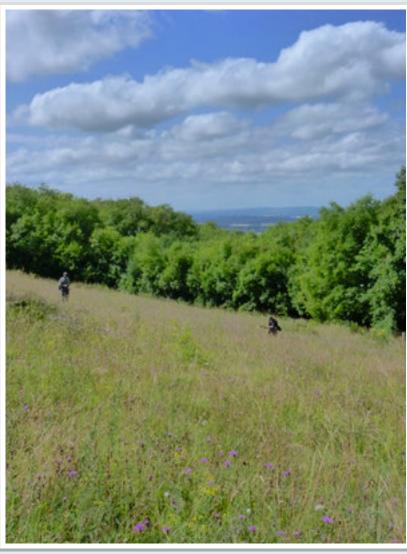
SSSK female



Brown Argus



Chalkhill Blue pair



Colin and Mark at Springhead Hill

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-13 12:26 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Great report and a fantastic tally of species seen. Loving the Brown Argus photo, not seen many of those this year.

Small Coppers have certainly bounced back this year around my patch at Solihull after last years dismal showing. White Admirals also seem to be doing a bit better in Warwickshire than previous years. Still not seeing many Common Blues locally, they are present at most usual spots but only in small numbers so far, a bit better than last year but not much.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Aug-13 10:45 AM GMT

New Discoveries

On Saturday (3rd August) I completed one of several surveys I perform on the Knepp Castle Estate, where Sir Charlie Burrell is running his innovative rewilding scheme. Highlights of the day included Clouded Yellow, my first Brown Hairstreak of the year (male and female), and several Purple Emperor. Although Matthew Oates and I have alluded to the discovery of a large population of Emperors in Sussex (e.g. Purple Empire http://apaturairis.blogspot.co.uk/), we didn't want to spill the beans until Charlie returned from holiday Down Under. There will be plenty to report in

time, but the big news is that Matthew and I made counts of 84 and 71 Purple Emperor over different parts of the Estate on successive days. The habitat is essentially linear, so there is little chance of double-counting; these are individuals rather than sightings.





In the BC Sussex 2012 Butterfly Report I speculated that "Although numbers (of Silver-spotted Skipper) were lower than last year, warm and calm anticyclonic conditions during the flight period will hopefully have encouraged its attempts to move further through the Sussex landscape." So later in the day, and bearing in mind the recent sighting of a Silver-spotted Skipper at Springhead Hill, I decided to stop at Cissbury Ring, just in case. Ulrika! I spotted a female almost immediately, followed by 5 different males. This ratio of sexes suggests a recent colonisation, with these 2013 butterflies having emerged on-site. The area where I found them, the south-facing slope just below the ramparts (TQ137075), is approximately 6.5 Km from the Chantry Hill colony. I hope they manage to gain a firm foot-hold, as the habitat appears ideal for the species; it could do very well here.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pauline, 05-Aug-13 03:16 PM GMT

Lovely BH Neil. I just knew you'd be first to see them 😊

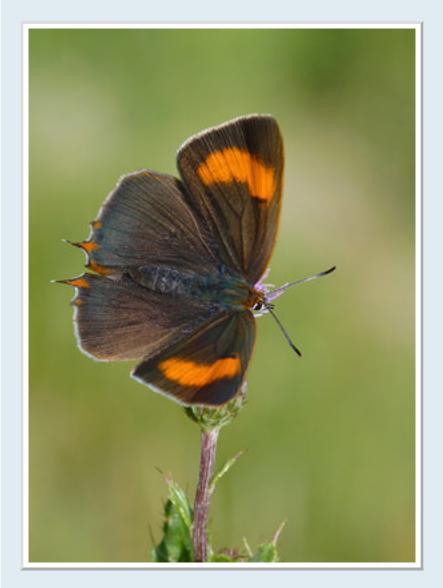


Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Aug-13 03:35 PM GMT

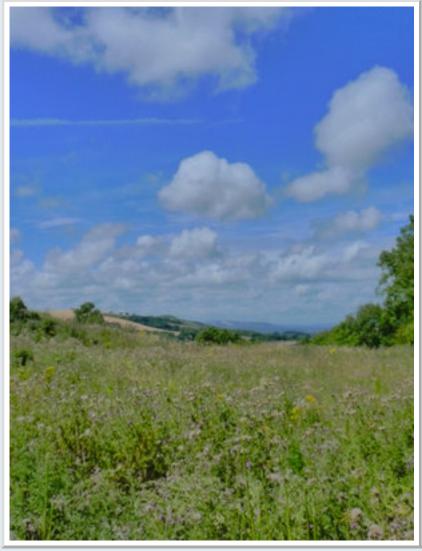
Chasing Brownies

Yesterday (4th August) I started off at Steyning Rifle, which was surprisingly quiet ... that won't last for long! The Brown Hairstreak season is underway and I found two females during the couple of hours I was there. Despite following one for more than 20 minutes, there was no attempt at egg-laying; these individuals had recently emerged and were only interested in sunbathing or nectaring. The Prunus looks to be in superb condition and I'm optimistic that the site will perform well this year. Numbers will probably remain modest this week, before picking up at the weekend or early next week.





I then moved on in the hope of finding more Silver-spotted Skipper colonists, drawing a blank at Washington Chalk Pits. The habitat here is currently being managed as part of the South Downs National Park Nature Improvement Area project, and does look suitable; it's only a matter of time.



Washington Chalk Pits

I was similarly unsuccessful at Rackham Gulley near Amberley. However, the lack of SSSk was more than made up for by the large number of other butterflies and superb views over the Wild Brooks. Small Skipper, Chalkhill Blue, Large and Small White were present in their hundreds. Amongst the more exotic were Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow, both of which appear to be cropping up with increasing regularity; a very welcome addition to the countryside.



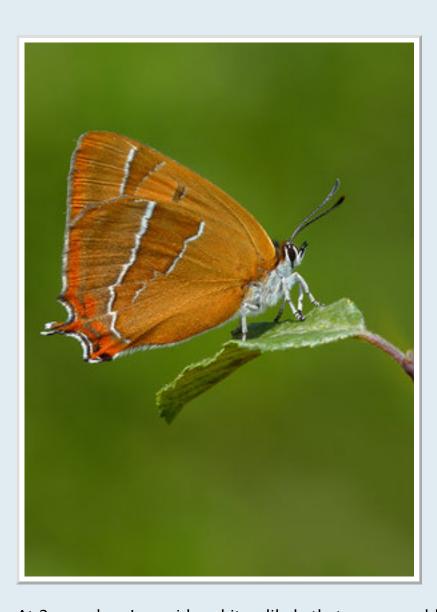


Common Blue Pair

by Neil Hulme, 06-Aug-13 09:37 PM GMT

Hairstreaks, Skippers And Blues

This morning (6th August) I returned to Steyning Rifle Range, knowing that a few more Brown Hairstreaks would have emerged. It didn't take long to find the first, but she didn't hang around for a photo shoot. The second was more co-operative and I even had time to 'phone a couple of friends to let them know of its location, both arriving in time to get a few pictures. Sadly, the upper surface was blemished, detracting from one of the beautiful orange wing flashes. No complaints about the underside!



At 2pm, when I considered it unlikely that more would appear, I headed to Chantry Hill. It's a joy to be out on the Downs at the moment, with flowers and butterflies at their best. Although it was primarily the Silver-spotted Skipper I'd come to survey (c.25 seen), it was the beautiful, freshly emerged Common Blues I spent most time photographing.







Male Common Blue



Female Common Blue

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-13 03:39 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, Looks like you've bagged some nice Brownies yourself. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by mud-puddling, 07-Aug-13 08:57 PM GMT

Stunning shots again Neil; I have an almost identical shot of the Silver-spotted Skipper (see below) 😐



Unfortunately my Brown Hairstreak profile didn't come out so well but fairly pleased with the open wings shot (despite the missing scales 😊) – all considered they are stunning butterflies. Hopefully will get the opportunity to visit the site again before the season ends.

Cheers, Leigh



Silver-spotted Skipper, Chantry Hill, West Sussex



Brown Hairstreak, Steyning, West Sussex

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-13 09:06 PM GMT

More SSSk

This afternoon (7th August) I needed to relieve the boredom of the office and paperwork so, despite the grey cloud cover, I headed back up to Chantry Hill near Storrington. In some of the more sheltered spots almost every flower and seed-head supported a roosting butterfly. No Swallowtail, Pale Clouded Yellow or Long-tailed Blue just yet, but I was more than happy to track down a few more Silver-spotted Skipper.





by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-13 09:11 PM GMT

Nice shots Leigh. It's such a shame about that beautiful Brown Hairstreak's wing. I was a little disappointed when she first opened up; I do expect them to be flawless during the first few days of the season! BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Matsukaze, 07-Aug-13 09:38 PM GMT

It gives them character though. In a way I quite like seeing the battered ones; they usually seem to be living a full and energetic butterfly life as if they were freshly emerged.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-13 11:18 PM GMT

Great shots of the Silver Spots Neil 🛡 Are they out and about during cloudy weather as most if the books talk about temperatures over 20 and sun? 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-13 11:41 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Like most grassland species, they don't go far in cloudy weather or when roosting, only burying down into the grass in really foul conditions. Photographing this species (well) when they are active in sunshine is nigh on impossible, but in overcast conditions or from 6pm onwards, get down low and scan the scabious and miniature thistle flowers for resting butterflies. Once you get your eye in it's surprisingly easy to find them. As long as you approach with care they're sitting ducks! BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-13 11:44 PM GMT

Brill! Cheers for the insider information



Have a goodun

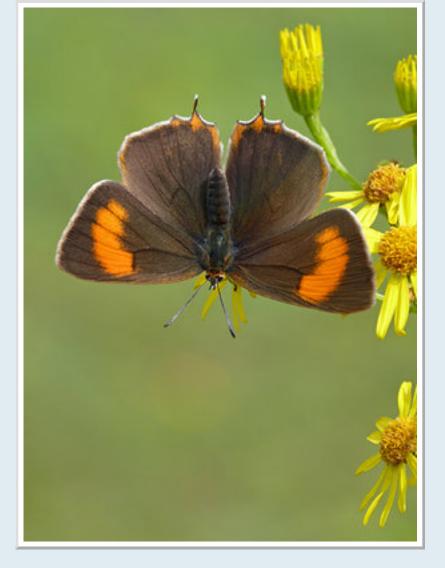
Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 08-Aug-13 08:59 PM GMT

Hairstreaks, Skippers And Elephants

First stop this morning (8th August) was the Knepp Castle Estate, where I worked along a blackthorn-rich field margin which produced a lot of Brown Hairstreak eggs during a survey last winter. I soon located two females nectaring on ragwort and thistle. In retrospect my late morning move to Steyning Rifle Range was unwise, as I only managed to locate a single female high in an ash tree. I then headed for Cissbury Ring to look for the Silver-spotted Skippers I discovered here recently, particularly as a friend was having difficulty finding them. It wasn't easy, but I eventually found two. On the way up towards the ramparts I spotted a beautifully marked Small Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar.





by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-13 09:29 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote: More SSSk

This afternoon (7th August) I needed to relieve the boredom of the office and paperwork so......

Oh how I wish I could do that... 😇 😉



Great images Neil, every one a stunner 😊



Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 09-Aug-13 09:34 PM GMT

Migrant Alert

Thanks Neil (nfreem). No office and no paperwork today, so I spent the entire day on the Downs! 😊



Although I'm seldom seeing more than a couple at a time, lovely Clouded Yellows are appearing almost everywhere I go at the moment, alongside plenty of Painted Ladies. I'm still waiting for the rare migrant I hope might be just around the corner; anticipation is building as more of these seem to be turning up by the day. I'm aware of two Long-tailed Blues and a Swallowtail in Sussex in just the last 48 hours!

Silver-spotted Skippers are still emerging on my local site, with an increase in the number of females seen.



SSSk female

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Aug-13 08:20 PM GMT

Skippers On The Move

Since discovering the Silver-spotted Skipper on Cissbury Ring (3rd August) I've spent many hours searching for the species across other potential sites in the area, without much success. I had already drawn a blank at Washington Pits (4th August), so I was doubly pleased when determination paid dividends during a return visit on 11th August. I only found a couple of specimens, but one was a male, which suggests to me that the butterflies emerged here this August. I'm fairly sure these are the progeny of a pioneering female which visited the site in 2012; I suspect that it's only the females which head off in search of pastures new, unlike for instance the Chalkhill Blue (why do the males do that?). This location (TQ128119) is 4 Km from the nearest known established colony at Chantry Hill, and almost precisely the same distance from the Cissbury Ring find.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Aug-13 09:11 PM GMT

Dorset (Part 1)

On Monday (12th August) I headed off to join the family at a holiday site near Warmwell in Dorset. Looking at the map I realised this was an ideal opportunity to visit Shipton Bellinger en route, with only a slight deviation . I soon caught up with PhiliB, who I had arranged to meet for a guided tour, this being a new site for me. We had an interesting morning to early afternoon session during which we saw 4 female and nearly a dozen male Brown Hairstreak. It was a day of 'almosts' as males repeatedly descended from their lofty perches, but only momentarily touched down before looping back up into the canopy. A couple of females proved equally awkward. Although none of the specimens were particularly worn, it soon became quite clear from their condition (some individuals) that this site is quite 'early' compared to my local Steyning site. One big difference is that males seem far more willing to come down low here.



Male



Female

On the morning of my first full day in Dorset (13th August) I headed out onto Portland to explore the BC reserve at Broadcroft Quarry. This place is well worth a visit and I'm keen to return during the Silver-studded Blue flight season in the future. I was a little disappointed not to find the two species I was hoping for (Grayling and Lulworth Skipper are listed for the site), but there was plenty on offer including Clouded Yellow, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Brimstone, Small Skipper, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Holly Blue, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall (plenty), Gatekeeper, Marbled White, Meadow Brown and Small Heath.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Matsukaze, 15-Aug-13 09:51 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote: Skippers On The Move

...I'm fairly sure these are the progeny of a pioneering female which visited the site in 2012; I suspect that it's only the females which head off in search of pastures new, unlike for instance the Chalkhill Blue (why do the males do that?)...

Is it just that the male Chalkhill is so much more conspicuous? I noticed mention a few days ago of a few females dispersing into woodland on the Sussex Branch sightings page (the best sightings page of any branch, I think). It seems to have got missed among the more immediately exciting things going on in your part of the world!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Aug-13 10:37 PM GMT

Hi Matsukaze,

The males are certainly more noticeable, but that's not really the point I was trying to make. Chalkhill Blue females certainly disperse, but it's quite unusual, outside a couple of lycaenid species (including CHB) for *males* to do so with intention and regularity. At first sight this would seem a pointless exercise. It is easy to explain dispersal in gravid female insects, as they just need to locate suitable new habitat patches to further the aims of their species. It's more difficult to explain this behaviour in male insects.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 16-Aug-13 03:21 AM GMT

It's more difficult to explain this behaviour in male insects.

Perhaps the same as human males - hoping for new conquests in a new area. Male Chalkhill Blues won't know when they wander off that that it's a waste of time as there are no discos in that direction.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Aug-13 09:09 AM GMT

Hi Jack,

Firstly, I should clarify that I'm referring to colonial species, as male butterflies of the wider countryside (non habitat specialists) such as Orange Tip and Brimstone will of course wander many miles in search of a mate.

"Male Chalkhill Blues won't know when they wander off that it's a waste of time as there are no discos in that direction." Therein lies the risk for a pioneering male (in a colonial species), as there is a good chance he'll never find another colony, disco, house of ill repute or, more to the point, a virgin female. Passing on his genes is his raison d'etre, so this does seem like a high risk strategy. Perhaps only males (in colonial species) which have already mated do this? I would love to know how this works!

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 16-Aug-13 09:58 AM GMT

Passing on his genes is his raison d'etre

That is the received wisdom but I do have to wonder. Do human males really think along those line? Surely not! They know that they will enjoy the experience and passing on their genes is probably the last thing on their minds at that moment – except perhaps Royalty who of course HAVE to produce heirs

Don't they say that a "man's brain is in his xxxx"?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Aug-13 10:05 AM GMT

"Don't they say that a "man's brain is in his xxxx"?" My point entirely! 😊 BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 16-Aug-13 12:10 PM GMT

Dorset (Part 2) - Confused Of Lulworth

On the afternoon of 13th August I headed east to Durlston Country Park, primarily to find the Lulworth Skipper, but always with an eye open for possible migrants. I found plenty of skippers and was pleasantly surprised at the freshly emerged appearance of one or two female butterflies. That said, the vast majority were very worn and faded. Although the weather was warm and sunny there was a strong wind blowing, so I didn't really do them justice with the camera. I also spotted a few Clouded Yellows and a Grayling before leaving this wonderful site.



Lulworth Skipper (Female), Durlston Country Park



Durlston Country Park

On Wednesday morning (14th August) there was only a short weather window available, so I headed to the nearer location of Lulworth Cove. Bearing in mind that this site is earlier for Lulworth Skipper than Durlston, I thought I had little chance of finding any decent specimens. However, nothing is predictable about this species at the moment, and I spent some time discussing its changing phenology with Pete last year. Even given its currently protracted emergence period, I was surprised and delighted to find a very pretty female in mint condition.



Lulworth Skipper (female), Lulworth Cove

The average first appearance date for this species during the earliest part of the 21st Century was mid June, before the giant leap forward seen in many species due to the hot spring of 2007. Whereas most species returned to their recent calendars, the Lulworth Skipper seemed to get stuck, first appearing anywhere within the broad late April – late May period. While most species emerged 2.5 – 3 weeks later in 2013 than in 2012, the Lulworth was more than a month later, holding back until the start of July! Last year I photographed a freshly emerged female on 9th June, so to do the same on 14th August this year seems quite remarkable.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Pauline, 17-Aug-13 06:53 AM GMT

Those are great photos of Lulworth Skipper Neil, even the worn one as you have got the composition spot on, complementing the worn butterfly with the dead flower head – nice. Durlston has to be one of my favourite places which I can't get to as often as I'd like to great to see the photo.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Aug-13 08:55 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline. I was very pleased with the image of the female, particularly as this was at least a month later than I would have targeted the species for photography!

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 17-Aug-13 10:42 PM GMT

Worthing Downlanders

This afternoon (17th August) I led a walk on Cissbury Ring for the Worthing Downlanders, an organisation "dedicated to supporting and defending the ownership and control of all Worthing Council's existing downland estate, and supporting the management of this downland estate for public purposes, free of built development", see http://www.worthingdownlanders.org.uk. Fourteen of us braved the dull, windy and ultimately wet conditions in an attempt to see a few butterflies. When faced with such a negative weather forecast I always do my best to prepare in advance, which entails spending an hour or two looking for roosting butterflies and marking their position. Undoubtedly the best find was a Silver-spotted Skipper, a species which has only just colonised the site. The fact that this specimen appeared to be a freshly emerged female augers well for the establishment of a population here.



by Neil Hulme, 20-Aug-13 10:25 AM GMT

6 Long Tails

For anyone hoping to see the full set of rare migrants and vagrants, and that includes me, then this year's 'essential' is the Long-tailed Blue. This will probably turn out to be the best year for the species in a long time, and I suspect the story still has some way to run. Although singletons have been popping up here and there in Sussex and Hampshire, the best bet appeared to be Kingsdown Leas, just east of Dover, where up to 4 individuals had been reported. I headed over on Sunday (18th August) and booked into a B&B in Deal, to give me a full day of sunshine on the White Cliffs yesterday.

The first few hours on site were a little disappointing as I only managed to see one very tatty male, which literally seemed to be on its last legs, falling off its perch three times in quick succession! The numerous visitors on Sunday (mainly birders) had seen a couple more individuals, all nearer the Kingsdown end of the Leas. I got the impression I might have been watching the very end of the show.

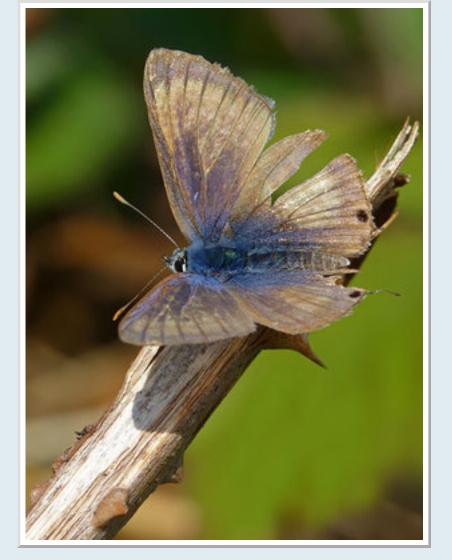
An early start on Monday (19th August) started well, with prolonged views of an egg-laying female ... and it just got better. By the end of the day, by using images to compare damage patterns (they've all seen much better days), I ended up with a total of 5 males (incl. the very tatty male of the 18th) and 1 female. This is a minimum count, based only on individuals I could prove through photography; I suspect there might have been 1 or 2 more.

Most of the male activity was in a discrete area towards the St Margaret's at Cliffe end of the site. Here there were sufficient males to ensure almost constant squabbling. The dogfights were spectacular, the best involving 3 Long-tailed Blues sparring against the backdrop of distant France; butterflying doesn't get much better than this! Although the males were chasing anything, it was only when they clashed with another LTB that they performed a spectacular, vertical spiral, reaching heights in excess of 50' and probably significantly more, becoming tiny specks before disappearing into the wild blue yonder. Their aggressive behaviour reminded me of that other thug, the Duke of Burgundy.

Matthew Oates and others have found eggs along a 1 Km+ stretch of the cliffs here, and I see no reason why we should not see fresh LTBs emerging in early October. With plenty of Clouded Yellow, Wall, a few Small Blue in the mix, and stunning views across the water to our neighbours, this proved to be one of my most enjoyable days out this season. Exciting times!

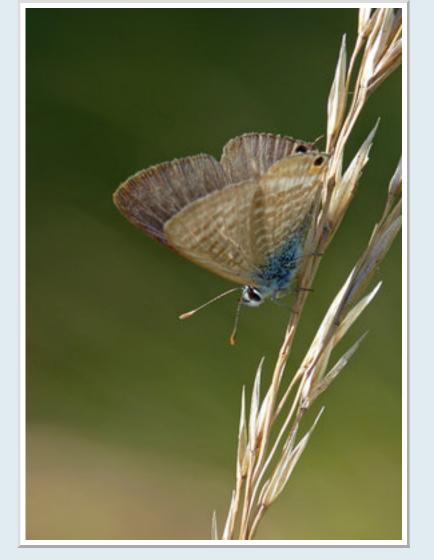
France Ahoy!

















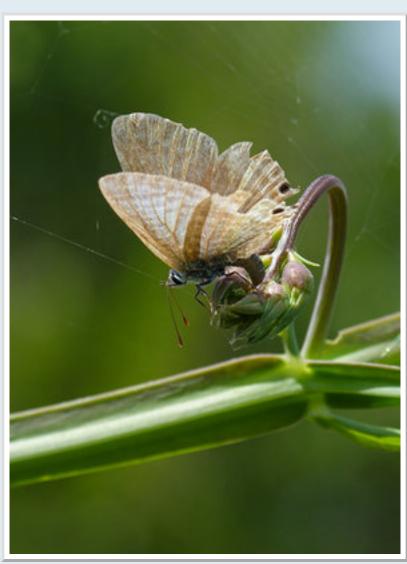
Kingsdown From The Leas



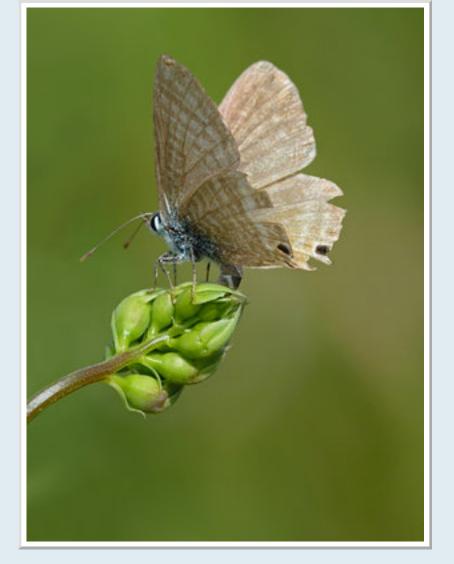
LTB female















Clouded Yellow



by Pauline, 20-Aug-13 10:32 AM GMT

Neil – you missed the Monarch at Steyning whilst you were away! Only joking 🨉 but keep your eyes open cos there seems to be one on its way up there.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 21-Aug-13 06:39 AM GMT

That's a splendid report Neil. I have a feeling though that isn't the finale to your year with one last surprise to come: Pale or Berger's Clouded Yellow perhaps?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Mark Colvin, 21-Aug-13 07:32 AM GMT

Great work, Neil.

Undoubtedly the best images produced of this rare migrant ...

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Aug-13 09:40 AM GMT

Thanks Jack and Mark. I'm hoping that this story has an even happier ending, as I'm sure that fresh LTB must emerge at Kingsdown and elsewhere in early October, or even late September.

No sign of the Monarch yesterday Pauline. It would have been a fair swop anyway ... already got one of them. 🧿



BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

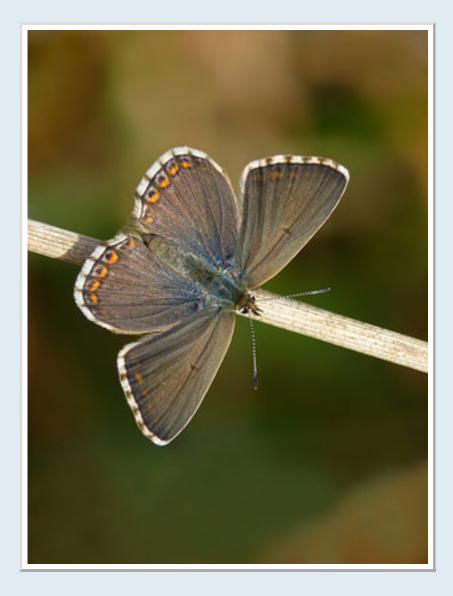
by Neil Hulme, 22-Aug-13 10:17 AM GMT

Brown, Blue And Silver

Brown Hairstreak numbers have been a little disappointing at Steyning Rifle Range this season, although I'm convinced the best is still to come, just in time for my guided walk on Sunday 25th August (see http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/events.html). Only 5 were seen on Tuesday (20th August) and it took me until 2.45 pm yesterday to wring out 6 females, most of which had suffered significant damage despite their relative youth.



Yesterday (21st August) I started and finished my tour of local sites at Mill Hill, where I hoped to photograph the second brood Adonis Blues. My brief morning visit was an instant success; only 10 metres from the car park I found a beautiful female opening her wings wide to the morning sun for the very first time.



When I returned in the evening the patches of longer grass and herbs along the lower slopes of Mill Hill were crammed with roosting butterflies. Huge communal roosts of Adonis, Chalkhill and Common Blues were a joy to sift through in the calm conditions. The male Adonis shown below was particularly photogenic.



The biggest and most welcome surprise of the day came just as I started to descend the steep scree slope at Mill Hill. At 6.10 pm most of the butterflies were already at roost ... but not the Silver-spotted Skipper which landed at my feet! County Recorder Colin Pratt can find no historic records of the species here, and it has certainly been absent since at least the 1930s. I was delighted, as this is the third new site for Silver-spotted Skipper I've found in the last few weeks.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 22-Aug-13 01:40 PM GMT

Correct me if I am wrong Neil, but isn't the sward on Mill Hill taller than at "traditional" SS Skipper sites? And again I stand corrected, isn't the SS Skipper on mainland Europe less associated with closely cropped vegetation as is (has been!) the case in England? Maybe another sign of climate change: southern England has become marginally warmer so SS Skipper doesn't always need that sun-baked turf that has previously been a requirement.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Aug-13 06:38 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

The steep slope at Mill Hill has very short, rabbit-grazed turf and plenty of bare ground and, being SW facing, it provides the sort of habitat that SSSk required in the 1980s and earlier. Some flatter areas, such as those you probably have better memory of, have longer grass.

Yes, SSSk has broader habitat tolerances than it did back in the C20th, allowing it to breed on slopes of all aspects and in longer turf. Hence Mill Hill has all options covered. It should do well here.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Aug-13 08:33 AM GMT

More To Come

Steyning Rifle Range continues to draw more Hairstreak-hunters than Hairstreaks at the moment, with the now standard 'half dozen' females being recorded yesterday (23rd August). The better news is that there are still mint condition specimens to be found, although many of those which have been out egg laying are already accumulating nicks and scratches. A pristine female hung from a bunch of ash keys in the largest Master Tree, just above head height, refusing to drop any lower until her eggs have ripened. Another unblemished example was found in a shady area of blackthorn on the path up to the site, just above the allotments. The weather forecast needs to improve before my guided walk tomorrow.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Aug-13 10:02 AM GMT

Gorgeous *gorganus*

At 5.30 pm yesterday (23rd August) I was just about to start getting ready for a night out at the Arundel Festival, when I received a 'phone call informing me that BC Sussex member David Bradford had found something rather special up on the Downs behind the Long Man of Wilmington. I could either continue with my original plan to watch 'Screaming Lez and the Mindbenders', or try to get most of the way to Eastbourne before jogging uphill for 1 km and then dropping into Deep Dean to photograph a European Swallowtail, all before the increasing gloom made photography impossible. In the end I made the journey by car and on foot in just under an hour, an Olympic record.

By the time I arrived, sweaty and breathless, Clare and Michael Blencowe were already with David, having made their own dash across Sussex. We took it turns to lie down next to this gigantic beauty, amazed that she had found her way here, only for David to spot her flapping around the hillside amongst the Grayling. I cannot thank him enough for taking the trouble to track her movements until she settled on a yellow-wort plant to roost, before making a few calls. Another childhood dream fulfilled!



gorganus!



David Bradford (finder) does the honours in fading light - image by Clare Blencowe



Deep Dean

by David M, 24-Aug-13 10:09 AM GMT

Your perseverence is amazing, Neil. I suppose, given the species in question, that it was relatively easy to keep track of meaning your journey was

Well done.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-13 10:20 AM GMT

Great stuff Neil 😊

I see there have been a number of Swallowtail sightings along the south coast recently but I must admit I had not been sure if these were gorganus immigrants or britannicus release/escapes, or indeed a bit of both.

It sure is turning into a great year for immigrants 😊



All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Trev Sawyer, 24-Aug-13 10:31 AM GMT

... and with the wind swinging around to a more easterly direction over the next few days (albeit not very strong), what chance a Camberwell Beauty to add to the list? Keep your eyes peeled!

Trev

by Jack Harrison, 24-Aug-13 10:43 AM GMT

One of the Pale Clouded Yellow species still to come? I would put money on it.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by mud-puddling, 24-Aug-13 02:11 PM GMT

Wow what a great find and photo. Neil would love to hear if you find anymore in the area. Cheers, Leigh

Re: Sussex Kipper

by andy_j, 24-Aug-13 04:14 PM GMT

the swallowtail i saw wasn't a million miles from there, it was at Berwick Church, near Drusillas roundabout. The one above is being reported by the sussex wildlife trust as being seen in Lewes ???

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Aug-13 05:23 PM GMT

"The one above is being reported by the sussex wildlife trust as being seen in Lewes ???"

No, it isn't.

The SWT blog reads "Lewes wildlife photographer David Bradford made an incredible discovery late this afternoon just off the South Downs Way <u>east of</u> Lewes." The location of the butterfly, as I pinpointed above, is 8 miles east of Lewes and 200 yds south of the South Downs Way.

The rhetorical question "How do you end a fantastic butterfly week in Lewes?" is posed by the blogger, who is called "LewesWildlife", because of the local nature of the news. Hope that clears up any confusion.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 24-Aug-13 09:45 PM GMT

Wow! What a year you're having. Thank you for sharing. It's s beautiful photo.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Aug-13 09:32 AM GMT

Thanks Susie. 2013 will already go down as a butterfly year to remember, but I suspect there are more highlights to come! BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Aug-13 10:12 AM GMT

Bank Holiday Butterflies

Sadly, my last guided walk of the season, at Steyning Rifle Range on Sunday 25th August, fell foul of the weather. Brighter, warmer spells were enough to tempt most species out, but not the lazy Brown Hairstreak. Visitors from Surrey stayed for a few more hours, and when the sun *did* appear, so did the target species. After the walk I headed over to Deep Dean at Wilmington, but the European Swallowtail had departed. The Grayling is still going strong up there.





On Monday (26th August) the sun shone brightly and the Brown Hairstreak showed in its best numbers yet this season, with 10 females busy at work in the blackthorn before they started to retire to the master trees at c.2.30 pm. The area high on the northern flank of the Rifle Range near the small wooden gate was very productive. Once it became clear that none of the females would descend again, I headed for Mill Hill, where several Clouded Yellows were whizzing across the slopes. At about 5.30 pm the beautiful Adonis Blues started to congregate at their evening roosts, opening their wings to catch the late afternoon sun.





by Jack Harrison, 27-Aug-13 10:32 AM GMT

Indeed, a vintage year Neil. I am full of admiration for your stamina.

My only real butterfly twitch was a 170 mile round trip for a Camberwell Beauty. I have been tempted by others, eg the Queens at Chichester. And I am sure if I still lived in Cambridgeshire, I would go for the Kent LT Blues in a month's time.

So, how far are you prepared to travel if say a Berger's or a Scarce Swallowtail is reported to have settled down in a particular locality? Scillies?

What is your total number of species seen in Britain? And what possibilities are you still missing?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Aug-13 09:11 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

If there was a large fall of Monarch on the Scillies I would certainly consider a trip. A visit to the Channel Islands to study the Large Tortoiseshell is on my 'to do' list.

In the UK I've seen all 59, plus Queen of Spain (9; Chichester and Springhead Hill), Large Tortoiseshell (8; Littlehampton Bridge, Newtimber Hill, Woodhouse Copse IOW and Walter's Copse IOW), Long-tailed Blue (6; Kingsdown Leas), Camberwell Beauty (1; RSPB Pulborough Brooks), Monarch (1; Portland), European Swallowtail (1; Wilmington) and Black-veined White (2; Stockbridge Down, highly dodgy, almost certainly releases). I've seen a few other 'goodies', including the very rare 'ab. *polonus*' (*bellargus x coridon*) and a large number of named aberrants. I would certainly like to catch up with a Pale Clouded Yellow, but there isn't much more that I have a *realistic* chance of seeing. Perhaps Map?

I'm quite happy to play the listing game, but to put it in context this remains an insignificant interest when compared to the hands-on conservation work I'm involved with. Personal lists will soon pass into irrelevance with time.

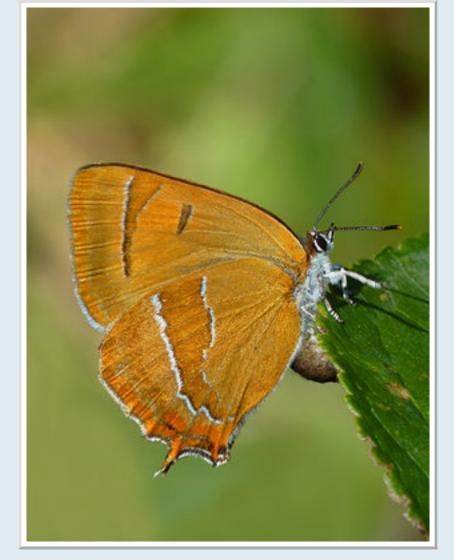
BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

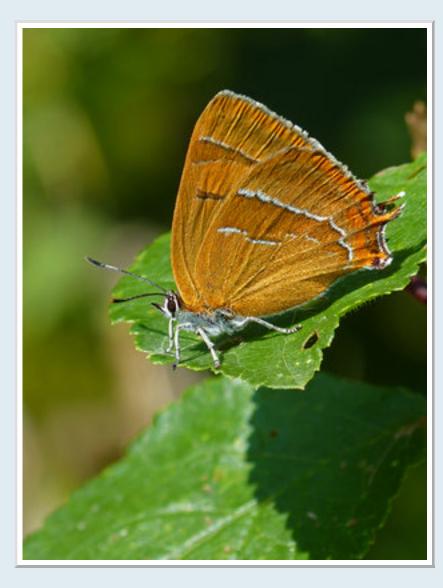
by Neil Hulme, 29-Aug-13 09:54 AM GMT

Hairstreak Peak

The Brown Hairstreak now appears to be at peak in Sussex, based on results at the well-watched Steyning Rifle Range site. Large numbers of hairstreak fans continue to visit and yesterday (28th August) saw about half a dozen females at work in the blackthorn, with nearly as many staying up high. Some of the females are still in surprisingly good condition. The butterfly was very obliging (unlike the previous day), so everyone went away with some pleasing images. Sometimes it's nice to find peace and solitude while out butterflying, but Steyning provides the goods at the opposite end of the scale; there's often a real party atmosphere here as we celebrate the last few weeks of another season. When the scores on the doors are counted, this will prove to have been a rather average *betulae* season locally, and I believe some parts of the country have fared significantly better. If you want to see a Brownie in good condition this year, the coming weekend might be your last chance.







by Butterflysaurus rex, 29-Aug-13 10:17 AM GMT

I love the first shot Neil, I know you showed it to me yesterday but it looks even better on the big screen, lovely stuff 😊



I'll give you a 9.5 and a half for that one 😉

All the best

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 29-Aug-13 10:59 AM GMT

The symmetrical nicks in the forewings – suggested reasons please Neil. (crawling though foliage with wings closed perhaps?)

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Aug-13 03:31 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

That's a subject I've covered in some detail on here, illustrated with close-up images. It might be in my Personal Diary, but could have been a separate topic. I'll dig it out once the flight season is over.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Aug-13 03:33 PM GMT

Thanks B. rex. I've awarded myself a more generous 9.75. See you on the cliffs for LTB! 😊 BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by ChrisC, 29-Aug-13 06:37 PM GMT

are you joining the winter gathering Neil? i'll buy you a beer or 2 for the amount of work you get through that keep the sussex populations going.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Aug-13 07:49 PM GMT

Thanks Chris. Looks like I should be able to make it this year. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Aug-13 07:57 PM GMT

Mr & Mrs

As I was passing Mill Hill this afternoon (29th August) at about the right time (c.5 pm), I couldn't resist a brief visit to watch the Adonis Blues go to roost. A few fresh male and female butterflies can still be found here, amongst the rapidly fading Chalkhills.





by Butterflysaurus rex, 29-Aug-13 08:35 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Thanks B. rex. I've awarded myself a more generous 9.75. See you on the cliffs for LTB!
BWs, Neil

9.75 eh! Well allright then I'm happy with that 😊 I hope we'll see the season out in ablaze of LTB glory.

Another cracking pair of Adonis photos there Neil.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 30-Aug-13 08:06 PM GMT

The Bluest Blue

Today (30th August) I visited the Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve at Malling Down with BC Sussex Chair Nigel Symington. Crispin Holloway, who has walked the transect here for many years, had alerted me to the exceptional number of second brood Adonis Blue currently flying in the deep coombes above Lewes, and we were not to be disappointed! We saw many hundreds, representing a small proportion of the total population. Conditions for photography were very difficult and the strong wind whisked away many desirable specimens, including a stunning female with huge, blood-red lunules along her rear wing margins. The steep slopes of Malling Down have never been easily accessible, but at the moment a visit is highly recommended.











by Jack Harrison, 30-Aug-13 08:16 PM GMT

With detail like the scales in the last image, who needs a DSLR? (there should be a Smilie for "stir") Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 30-Aug-13 08:48 PM GMT

Even by your standards, Neil, those images are particularly stunning.

How DO you do it? You were using similar equipment to me when we met at Botany Bay a few weeks ago. 🤩



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Crispin, 30-Aug-13 09:45 PM GMT

Neil, those are superb photos!

That female with the blood-red lunules sounded interesting.

I guess you would have seen quite a few Silver-spotted Skippers too?

Malling Down, this year, is the best it has been for a long time – it is always good but this year it is superb.

Had a very fresh Painted Lady in the garden this morning - I expect we shall all be seeing more soon, along with the LTB & CY in few weeks.

by Ian Pratt, 31-Aug-13 06:33 AM GMT

Great to read your diary with such wonderful photos. Hopefully, your daughter will take the baton from you in due course. **BWs**

lan

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 31-Aug-13 08:00 AM GMT

lan:

Hopefully, your daughter will take the baton from you in due course.

Mustn't write Neil off too soon. F.W.Frohawk kept going until he was 85 and wrote his famous tome The Complete Book of British Butterflies at the age of 73.

But there the comparison with *The Kipper* must end. Frohawk was born in Norfolk and even lived for a while in his youth in that splendid town (?) of Great Yarmouth.

Not that I am biased of course.



Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Aug-13 09:07 AM GMT

Thanks all,

David: I'm still using the trusty FZ38 with close-up lens. In good light it can certainly take a good picture. 🤝



Crispin: Yes, Silver-potted Kipper still going well on Malling, although clearly beyond peak season now.

Ian & Jack: I'm rather hoping that Mia will be helping me to the top of Heyshott Escarpment when I'm 100. 85 is quite young these days.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Aug-13 03:52 PM GMT

Hairstreaks Making Hay

Visitor numbers are now decreasing at Steyning Rifle Range, but not the number of Brown Hairstreaks on view. Nine females were active this morning (31st August) in the warm harvest sunshine, including two which remained just above head-height. Both of these were in perfect condition and probably haven't started egg-laying yet. The others varied in condition, from battered to quite reasonable, with the specimen below being at the better end of the scale.



by Ian Pratt, 31-Aug-13 11:12 PM GMT

How do I get to Steyning rifle range as I may get there tomorrow? Regards Ian

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Aug-13 11:45 PM GMT

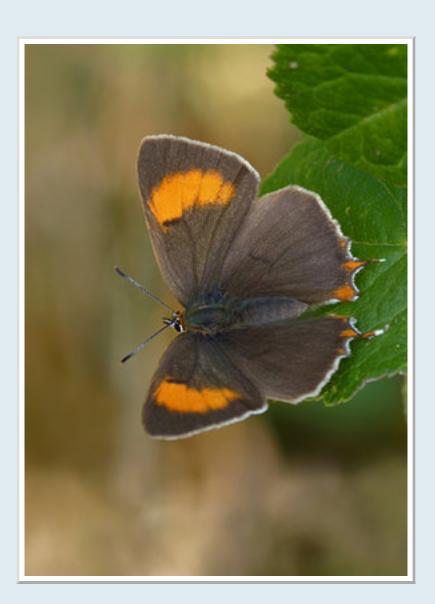
Hi lan, Head for TQ168112. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 01-Sep-13 06:01 PM GMT

First Of The Month

Having seen a couple of Brown Hairstreak in perfect condition yesterday, I couldn't resist another bash at Steyning Rifle Range this morning (1st September). The weather was much better than forecast and I was surprised to have the place to myself, with the exception of UKBer/BC Sussex member Leigh Prevost. Two visitors from Rochester appeared later in the day, just in time for Leigh to locate a Brownie for them; their first ever! Of the 7 females I saw at close range, 4 were in very good condition, and 2 were completely unmarked – a great result for September!



by Wurzel, 01-Sep-13 06:23 PM GMT

A bit of an apology Neil as I seldom leave comments on your PD 🤒 It's only I never know quite what to say as others often beat me to it or writing "brill" etc just doesn't do it justice 🤐 Bearing that in mind... brill shot of the September Brostreak 😊 😇

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Butterflysaurus rex, 01-Sep-13 06:49 PM GMT

Ahhggg it looks like I peaked too early Neil 📦 just when I thought it was all over! Maybe another dash over to Steyning is in order.

Another cracking photo btw.

Best

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Butterflysaurus rex, 01-Sep-13 07:20 PM GMT

Sorry Neil I almost forgot, you don't really need me to tell you but that's a 10 out of 10 no doubt about that 😊 real belter.

Best

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-Sep-13 08:23 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

No need to apologise, "brill" will do just fine, as will "amazeballs".



Hi B. rex,

Every year we get this 'second wave' of fresh female hairstreaks, and every year it takes me by surprise. These butterflies emerged more than a week ago, but have sat around in the ash trees doing nothing while their eggs ripen ... until now. I fluffed a shot of another 'perfect ten' later in the day, up by the top gate.

Equally intriguing is the very low number of repeat sightings from day-to-day. Of those that I do see, I doubt that I see more than 5% more than once. Worth another visit or two!

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Butterflysaurus rex, 02-Sep-13 08:33 PM GMT

Not quite so good today at Steyning today Neil 🙂 see my diary for a report. I might just give it one last try this week though 😉

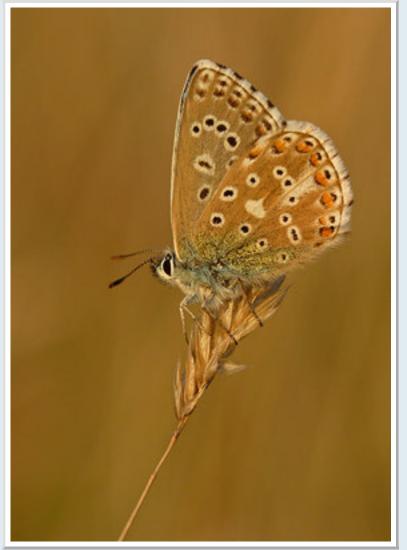


Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-Sep-13 09:44 PM GMT

September Gold

With the onset of September the early evening light always seems to take on that special quality which signals the approach of autumn. During a quick visit to Cissbury Ring I watched the butterflies collect to roost in the long grass, bathed in a beautiful golden glow.



Adonis Blue



Small Heath

Re: Sussex Kipper by David M, 02-Sep-13 09:56 PM GMT

That Small Heath's practically sepia, Neil.

Re: Sussex Kipper

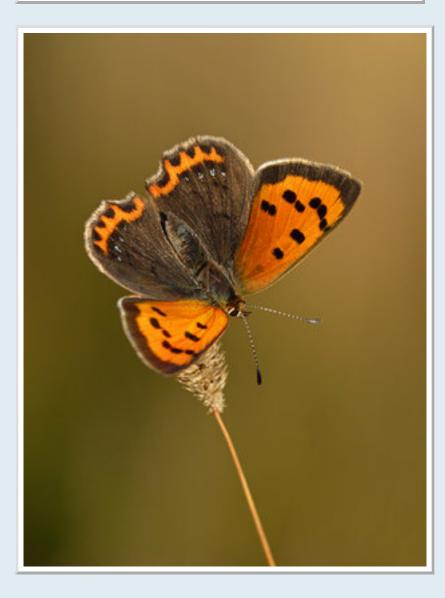
by Neil Hulme, 03-Sep-13 11:52 PM GMT

More September Gold

Another brief visit to Cissbury Ring this evening (3rd August) produced this stunningly beautiful, blue-spotted, caeruleopunctata Small Copper.





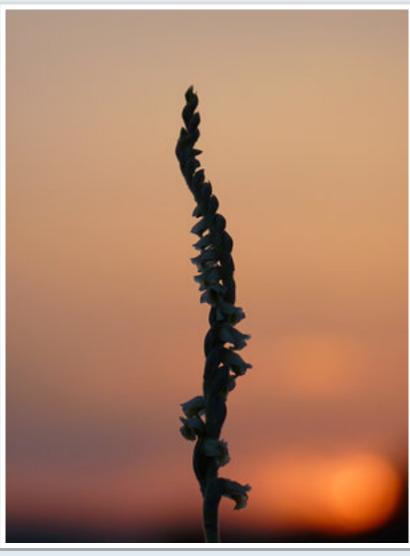


by Neil Hulme, 05-Sep-13 10:04 PM GMT

Autumn Flowers

Although I was tempted to watch another sunset from Cissbury Ring this evening (5th August), I opted to try and find some Adonis Blue aberrants at roost in a valley near Beeding, in the Adur Valley. I soon became distracted by the small but very beautiful orchid, Autumn Lady's Tresses. I regularly see this on my travels over the South Downs in September, but never before in this quantity. I didn't attempt to accurately estimate their number, but I certainly saw many hundreds and I suspect there are well in excess of 1000 plants on the site.





As this is supposed to be a butterfly diary, I've added an image of another Small Heath, taken in the evening sunshine on Cissbury Ring on 3rd September.



by Trev Sawyer, 06-Sep-13 08:32 AM GMT

Lovely shots as usual Neil 😃

I hadn't seen ALTs until earlier this week and I was amazed at just how incredibly small they are. The tallest one I measured was 7cm "high".

Trev

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 14-Sep-13 12:25 AM GMT

Cornwall Coast Path In September

Although the weather was slightly disappointing for much of the week we've just spent in Cornwall, the sun came out on the morning of 12th September and remained out all day, until it finally sunk below the rugged outline of Bodmin Moor, providing one of the most spectacular, fiery red sunsets I've seen this year. As the rest of the family took a more relaxing option, I walked the Cornwall Coast Path from Lansallos to Polruan, then retraced my steps and walked eastwards to Polperro and back.

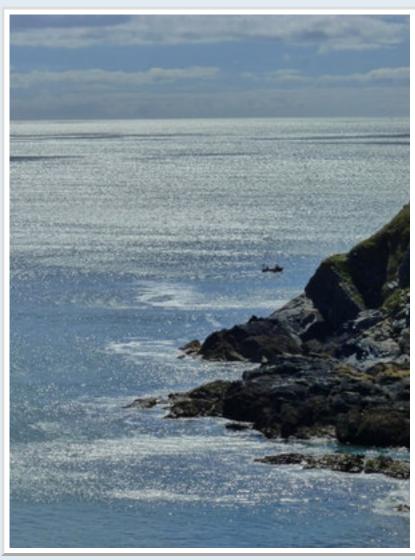
After speaking to local expert Lee Slaughter, who suggested that I would probably do best for migrant butterflies further west (thanks for your help Lee), I decided that I would explore the coastline nearer to our holiday home in Polgooth, having visited the Lizard area several times previously. In the end I was far from disappointed with the butterflies I encountered, which included Clouded Yellow (13), Small White (c.200), Large White (5), Small Copper (1), Common Blue (4), Painted Lady (3), Small Tortoiseshell (24), Red Admiral (6), Peacock (1), Speckled Wood (c.50), Wall (4) and Meadow Brown (7). A few of the Small Tortoiseshell were seen heading out to sea and it was encouraging to see good numbers of this species elsewhere during our travels. Where the path dipped through sheltered, scrub-lined hollows, Speckled Wood males patrolled and constantly clashed. For several unfortunate individuals which became distracted by their rivals, a sticky end awaited. The image below shows a Speckled Wood packed and processed less than 10 seconds after colliding with a spider's web. However, although butterflies were plentiful, it was the breathtakingly beautiful scenery that made this a day to remember for a very long time.





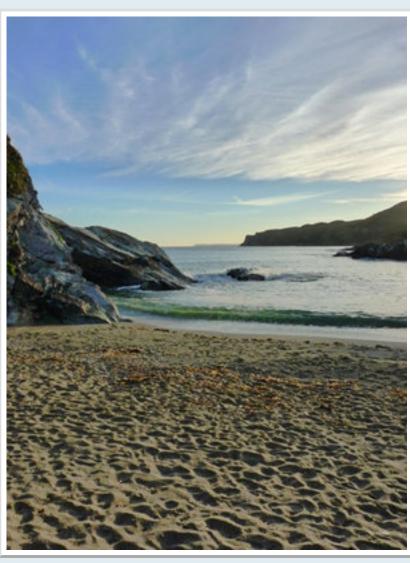














by Ian Pratt, 14-Sep-13 08:54 AM GMT

No sunset photos? Ian

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 14-Sep-13 03:40 PM GMT

Beautiful photos. The second to last is a real favourite.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-13 10:13 PM GMT

Agreed - beautiful shots but I still reckon Dorset's better 🙂 I am totally biased of course 😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by essexbuzzard, 17-Sep-13 11:39 PM GMT

I'm glad you managed to get some good weather in Cornwall, great scenery shots there, btw.

I know the Lansallos cliffs area quite well. Did you notice all the gorse bushes there? In late April and May, this south-facing area is great for Green Hairstreaks. A couple of years ago, i found my only ever mating pair here in late april. And, as you have shown, the views here are guite splendid!

Don't take any notice of that Wurzel. Dorset is excellent-but Cornwall is the best! (Not that i'm biased or anything 👻).



Re: Sussex Kipper

by lee3764, 18-Sep-13 10:29 PM GMT

Glad you had a good time Neil....Keep me informed when the Long-Tailed Blues emerge in Kent please. It was a pleasure speaking with you on the phone last week. Cheers.....Lee Slaughter (Par, Cornwall).

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-Sep-13 11:33 PM GMT

Thanks all. Since Hannah has family in the area, I think we'll be here again in the not too distant future. Almost as nice as West Sussex! 🨉 BWs, Neil



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 21-Sep-13 12:44 AM GMT

Long-tailed Blue Alert

Following a brief encounter with a perfect female Long-tailed Blue on Wednesday, I today (20th September) returned to Kingsdown Leas (near Dover) and found a second specimen. An emergence of British LTBs is now under way, following an influx of migrant butterflies during the first week of August (first picked up in Dover 6.8, Arundel 8.8, Pett & S. Wilts 9.8 etc). I also saw a very battered and faded LTB, suggesting that further migration events have occurred since the first wave - this specimen being interpreted as a primary migrant arriving late August. All three LTBs seen recently were at the St Margaret's end of the site, at Grid Ref TR379467. For those intending to make an early visit, before numbers (hopefully) pick up, it is worth pointing out that these three sightings of 20 minutes, 10 minutes and 30 seconds duration, took a total of nearly 13 hours on site to achieve.

Also today, Colin Knight found a newly emerged female LTB at Newhaven Tide Mills in East Sussex ... Congratulations!

Full report coming soon. Prepare for some late season fireworks!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by lee3764, 21-Sep-13 02:02 PM GMT

Nice speaking with you when you visited Cornwall recently....... am grateful that you have given other folk an opportunity to see the Longtailed Blues at kingsdown Leas. On the strength of our telephone conversation and this posting I am considering undertaking the 350 odd mile journey from Cornwall in a week or twos time. I will keep a daily watch on this site and your postings and others to sort out my plans bearing in mind I have 2 young children (8 & 10) to take with me.....and a wife! My 10 year old is on 49 different species (as I am) this year alone in England and a L.Tailed Blue would hit the magical 50 in one year! He is already on 52 different British species in Britain in his lifetime too!! Keep up the great reporting folks & Neil too!

All the best & hoping too for plenty of L.T. Blues this Autumn,

Lee Slaughter (Cornwall).

Joint founder member of Butterfly Conservation (Cornwall Branch) in 1993 and butterfly fieldtrip organiser for 20 years.

by Neil Hulme, 21-Sep-13 06:28 PM GMT

"There'll Be Tailed Blues Over The White Cliffs Of Dover"

The events leading up to the much anticipated emergence of Long-tailed Blues on British soil started in the first week of August, when weather conditions combined with a good butterfly season to trigger a northwards movement of both common migrants and exotics. On 3rd and 4th August hundreds of Large and Small Whites appeared in almost every downland coombe I visited, along with increased numbers (but modest by 2009 standards) of Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow. 140 Clouded Yellows were reported in a lucerne field at Thorney Island on 7th August.

Causing great excitement was the quick-fire appearance of Long-tailed Blues at Dover (5th/6th August), Arundel (8th August), Pett (near Rye) and South Wilts (9th August). The species was first noticed at Kingsdown Leas (east of Dover) by the 'Bockhill Birders' on 11th August, and it is they who should take credit for setting the ball rolling, for without focused searching this butterfly will often go undetected. It is here that most people will ultimately gain great pleasure from seeing this rarity; many have already visited to see the initial wave of LTBs. The species later appeared elsewhere, including sites at Newhaven, Hayling Island and North Kent coast.

Alongside the LTBs came European (*gorganus*) Swallowtails at Friston Forest (3rd August), Reculver (4th August), Dungeness (6th August), Steyning (8th August) and elsewhere through August. Other exotics included Queen of Spain at Titchfield Haven (15th August) and Monarch at Shoreham (19th August).

Long-tailed Blue is really a Mediterranean species, with strong migratory instincts taking it up through mainland Europe each summer, although it rarely makes it across The Channel. On the 'birdforum' website, stevefrance64, located in Soule Pays Basque, posted his observations of an "explosion" on his home patch, with counts of 20+ per hour from about 3rd August onwards. This burgeoning population may have triggered a movement northwards through France and over the water.

Many of the LTBs spotted have been ovipositing females and Matthew Oates and others found numerous eggs on the broad-leaved everlasting pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*) spread over nearly 1 km along the cliff tops at Kingsdown Leas. An autumn emergence of British LTB appeared inevitable.

Having seen a total of 6 LTB (5m, 1f) on 18th and 19th August, all of which I interpreted as primary migrants (rather than the progeny of earlier arrivals), I returned to Kingsdown Leas on 18th September. This was earlier than originally intended, having learned from the literature, and from those who have bred the species in captivity, that the life-cycle in this species is very rapid (5 - 6.5 weeks). In captivity it can apparently be even quicker than this!

Soon after 11.30 am I had a perfect female LTB sitting in front of me, perched on its food-plant. I watched her for about 20 minutes before she disappeared for good, which was just long enough for my hands to become steady enough for a few pleasing shots. Despite a long, fruitless wait for another sighting, I went home on Cloud Nine.

On 20th September I had a longer than predicted wait for some sunshine and warmth, during which I found a spectacular Great Green Bush-cricket. As 2 pm approached male Adonis Blues started to open their wings, including a few surprisingly good specimens. As the sun finally broke through I located another fresh female LTB, this time spending about 10 minutes with her before she disappeared.

Perhaps most surprising was the second sighting; a LTB which was almost unrecognisable it was so worn. I only saw it briefly before it retired to the upper reaches of a pine to roost, so could not determine its sex. Given the likely individual lifespan of an adult, this probably crossed The Channel during the last days of August, inferring additional movements beyond the original influx. This is supported by the report on 'birdforum' by tittletattler, who observed one coming in off the sea on 25th August.

These butterflies are providing a once-in-a-lifetime spectacle at the end of one of the best seasons I can remember in over 40 years of butterfly-watching. Hopefully they will put on a good show for others through the remainder of September, and well into October if the weather is kind.



Great Green Bush-cricket



Adonis Blue male



Long-tailed Blue female



Long-tailed Blue female



Long-tailed Blue habitat



Long-tailed Blue female



View towards St Margaret's

Re: Sussex Kipper by Jack Harrison, 21-Sep-13 06:50 PM GMT

I once saw many on an (unidntified pea-like bush) just before Christmas somewhere in north Arabia area (Dubai?) So not just a Med species.



That picture is stunning. I'm jealous.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 21-Sep-13 07:16 PM GMT

Thanks Jack.

"So not just a Med species" - Correct, I'm really referring to its European distribution here. It's actually pretty global.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 21-Sep-13 07:42 PM GMT

That is a magnificent (not to mention highly helpful) report, Neil.

I may even be tempted to pay a visit myself if things continue to progress positively. It looks as though the weather is going to be both mild AND benign next week, which is unusual around the equinox. Once in a generation opportunity, perhaps?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by selbypaul, 21-Sep-13 08:01 PM GMT

Fantastic update Neil - The full story of how they came to be in Kent, with sound evidence, makes for excellent reading.

Like you say, its potentially a once in a lifetime event, especially given the rarity of long periods of Azures High Pressure this past ten years.

What a year 2013 has been. It will live long in the memory!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Butterflysaurus rex, 21-Sep-13 08:45 PM GMT

In a word wonderful 😊

Re: Sussex Kipper

by millerd, 21-Sep-13 09:39 PM GMT

That photo of a fresh female LTB would challenge the best taken anywhere in the world - and it was in Kent. Absolutely beautiful.

Dave

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Paul Harfield, 21-Sep-13 09:51 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Congratulations on tracking down the first of these British Long Tailed Blues and thanks for sharing it with us 😊 Great report and photos 😊 I am hoping to pay a visit myself, so as not to miss this 'once in a lifetime' event. I appreciate that this is a bit of an unknown quantity, but do you have any thoughts as to the duration of this emergence 🕜 Weather permitting, do you think the likelihood of seeing a British Long Tailed Blue will have increased or decreased in 2 weeks time 🕐

Oh, and by the way, how long is a piece of string



Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 21-Sep-13 10:33 PM GMT

"jackz432r" wrote:

Oh, and by the way, how long is a piece of string



Less than the 400 miles round trip I'll need to make, probably.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 21-Sep-13 11:22 PM GMT

Thanks all - much appreciated. I received a text from Matthew Oates this evening, informing me that another had been seen on the Leas today, but I have no further details yet. The emergence of wild, British specimens has only just begun, and I suspect that they will continue to appear well into October. If travelling any distance I'd give it a week, and chances of connecting with them will be greater in two weeks time than now. BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 22-Sep-13 03:02 AM GMT

Sounds well worth a visit 🔴



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Sep-13 10:43 AM GMT

LTB Life Cycle And Timings

I've been asked by several people about the life-cycle timing in Long-tailed Blue, as this has a bearing on the period over which the butterfly is likely to emerge. This species can go from egg to adult very swiftly, which is typical of the more successful, migratory species. This might vary between 5 and 6.5 weeks, depending largely upon environmental conditions. In this case early stage development would have been very rapid before the weather collapse on 6th September, and somewhat retarded thereafter. It is therefore likely that the emergence of wild, British specimens will now be strung out over several weeks.

In captivity the life-cycle can be even quicker. Mark Colvin recently bred through some eggs laid during the early August influx at Newhaven. His first adults emerged on 11th and 12th September, about a week earlier than they would have done in the wild. 'Forcing' is the result of keeping the early stages under cover, in more advantageous conditions. Mark has meticulously recorded the development of the early stages and there should be an excellent article in the next issue of the BC Sussex Butterfly Report. There can be no better reason to buy a copy when it's published!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 22-Sep-13 12:32 PM GMT

...without focused searching this {LT Blue] butterfly will often go undetected...

This is certainly true in my limited experience of the butterfly abroad. It's not a butterfly that "hits you in the face".

With circa 10 primary immigrants being reported let me speculate that this was less than 1% of the total immigrants to Britain. That would imply a minimum of 1,000 arrivals. I would hazard a guess that the number seen is much less than 1%, perhaps a mere 1/100th of 1%, So - and I would be the first to accept that my logic might be faulty - that would mean some 10,000 LT Blues reached these shores.

Incidentally, the archive weather charts show that winds were favourable with a light southerly drift on 4th and 5th August. There were also reports of a good showing of Aurora Borealis on that date but that of course can't have anything to do with the immigration. Unless......magnetic disturbance, etc. After all, some birds are alleged to use magnetic lines of force to assist navigation.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Sep-13 04:56 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

This is a very interesting subject, and one not easy to decipher with confidence. I think your first set of figures is probably about right, and the study of Von Roer (1970) casts some light on the issue. Only 1-2% of his marked, captive-bred Camberwell Beauty butterflies were observed and reported in the Ruhr district of Germany. Long-tailed Blues in the wider, UK countryside and so late in the season would be less obvious, but these figures at least give us a starting point. I suspect that when all the records are in we will have a count of c.20 primary immigrants along the South Coast. A total influx of several thousand LTB is probably a reasonable guestimate.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 22-Sep-13 05:04 PM GMT

LTB Update

Having seen an image of the butterfly, Matthew Oates has confirmed that the single Long-tailed Blue seen on Saturday 21st September at Kingsdown Leas was a male in perfect condition. I can't wait to get back there!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Freeman, 22-Sep-13 09:55 PM GMT

Hi Neil, just caught up with your LTB post..... WOW 😊



A fascinating report accompanied by great images, those LTB image are beautiful. And not forgetting the Adonis Blue and Great Green Bush Cricket, in any other post they would have attracted comment in themselves.

Excellent stuff,

Edit; Just a thought but given that this is a migratory species is there any likelihood that some of this home grown generation will disperse further inland? Obviously a lot will depend on the weather at this time of year.

Neil F.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by essexbuzzard, 22-Sep-13 10:01 PM GMT

Congrats, Neil! Fantastic stuff!

Given reasonable weather(!) perhaps we can realisticly hope LTB will continue to be seen there for another month, lets hope!

Clearly this species can complete it's breeding cycle in a remarkably short period, even during September's low temperatures and, hopefully, this will give many of us a perhaps unique opportunity to witness this remarkable event. 😊

Pleeeease keep us updated on progress!

I'm getting itchy feet already! 🥯



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 23-Sep-13 08:56 PM GMT

Thanks Neil and Mark.

Neil: It is unlikely they would move northwards from the site, given the relatively small size of the population and weather conditions. Certain triggers are required to encourage migratory behaviour.

Mark: Latest update from Matthew Oates this evening - he saw at least 5 different males and a female on the Leas today.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by essexbuzzard, 24-Sep-13 11:33 PM GMT

Thanks Neil.

I will be heading that way tomorrow of Thursday, weather forecast permitting.

Just need to find the nearest car park...

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Sep-13 11:39 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Park at TR379478 (easy) and then walk up the concrete steps to your immediate south, taking you up onto the cliff-tops and LTB Land. 6 - 7 Long-tailed Blues active today. Good luck.

BWs, Neil

by essexbuzzard, 24-Sep-13 11:50 PM GMT

Thanks so much for the prompt reply.

You have been so helpful, as always.

Cheers!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Freeman, 25-Sep-13 07:50 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Neil: It is unlikely they would move northwards from the site, given the relatively small size of the population and weather conditions. Certain triggers are required to encourage migratory behaviour.

BWs, Neil

Thanks for the reply Neil, I thought that would most probably be the case. A bit of wishful thinking really.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 25-Sep-13 09:01 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

BWs, Neil

It's much more likely that they will think about heading south as the days shorten ... back to mainland Europe. 🤓 🤓 🥹





Re: Sussex Kipper

by Butterflysaurus rex, 25-Sep-13 09:43 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Hi Neil,

BWs, Neil

It's much more likely that they will think about heading south as the days shorten ... back to mainland Europe. 🥮 🥶







Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 26-Sep-13 06:11 AM GMT

No favourable winds over next few days for them to go back south; winds in fact should be from east and southeast so more arrivals on the way 😉



Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 26-Sep-13 08:45 PM GMT

More Long-tails

On Tuesday (24th September) I spent another 6 hours on Kingsdown Leas, where quite a crowd had gathered to enjoy the Long-tailed Blues. Matthew & Sally Oates and UKB members Trev Sawyer, Dave Brown, Pauline and various spouses, along with some very nice folk I haven't met before, were all treated to great views of this spectacular little butterfly. There was a bit of a scramble when it came to photography, so I sat back and left others to it, being more than happy with the images I've already got. I would say that 6 or 7 Long-tailed Blues were seen throughout the day by various observers, although I could only be certain of increasing my personal tally by 4. Rather more surprising than the sighting of another LTB was a mint condition Small Blue!



Later in the day, following a lengthy flat spell, a group of enthusiasts gathered along the edge of a large garden in front of a spacious bungalow. The lovely couple who own the property were very generous in allowing us to observe the 3 LTBs which had outrageously decided to provide a multiple garden 'tick'. There can be no better argument for leaving an area of lawn in a more natural state! They even stopped the annual cut & collect to allow the LTBs to chase each other and the resident Chalkhill and Common Blues for the rest of the afternoon. I later emailed them some images as a memento.



On Wednesday (25th September) I headed over to the cliff tops at Birling Gap (near Beachy Head) to search for more LTBs, following the recent sighting by B. rex. On this occasion my luck ran out, but it's always a pleasure to walk through this spectacular landscape. In the 2 hours I was there I watched about half a dozen Red Admiral head out to sea



by millerd, 26-Sep-13 09:04 PM GMT

What a difference a couple of days can make, Neil. Conditions were far less benign, and despite Jack's forecast, the wind was very definitely in the northeast down there today!

Your photos are just amazing – and having seen them I was able to be 100% sure of the one I saw today. 逆 Brilliant.

And how on earth did you conjure up a Small Blue? Five different Blues at a UK site must be a record...

Dave

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 27-Sep-13 07:57 AM GMT

millerd being cheeky!

...and despite Jack's forecast, the wind was very definitely in the northeast down there today!

Local effect no doubt - or observer error 🛂 But still from an easterly quarter!

Neil. LT Blues presumably can't tolerate even the slightest of frosts. But I would imagine that right on the coast of that part of Kent, frosts are quite rare before December. So any chance do you think of another generation of LTBs in late October/early November?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Sep-13 08:17 AM GMT

Hi Jack,

Nobody has found any eggs yet (recent period), which is surprising given that home-grown (wild) females have been on the wing in the UK since 18th September. If none are found over the next week or two (and of course they might be), I think we will be able to make some assumptions, based on circumstantial evidence, regarding behaviour and reverse migration.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Butterflysaurus rex, 27-Sep-13 10:13 AM GMT

Sussex Kipper wrote: On Wednesday (25th September) I headed over to the cliff tops at Birling Gap (near Beachy Head) to search for more LTBs, following the recent sighting by B. rex. On this occasion my luck ran out, but it's always a pleasure to walk through this spectacular landscape. In the 2 hours I was there I watched about half a dozen Red Admiral head out to sea.

few and far between here in Sussex. I do hope I get lucky one more time and 'perhaps' get myself a better photo, I know I'm being greedy 😇



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 27-Sep-13 07:00 PM GMT

Boeticus Annus Mirabilis

This incredible year for the Long-tailed Blue continues. Just before midday I stopped at a site I've looked at perhaps ten times since early August, having noticed the large quantity of Broad-leaved Everlasting Pea along the road verges and over rough ground around the derelict (but still operational) Beeding Cement Works near Shoreham (TQ19910869). This time I got lucky and I saw 2 female LTBs in a quite short period of time. Having spent many hours in Kent looking at this species, these were my first in Sussex.

One was newly minted and the second was in fair condition, fully tailed, but had a slightly 'nibbled' fringe. The best example flew north over a hedge, heading towards some of the large clumps of pea growing along the roadside. The second specimen flew over the security fence but was visible for well over an hour, resting during cool periods and occasionally nectaring on ragwort and pea flowers. This gave me time to make a few 'phone calls and a string of visitors were able to enjoy the butterfly. While there Pete Varkala found a female Brown Hairstreak, providing a rare combination!

If visiting: Please do not block the track leading up to Cliff house - this rough track is a private driveway. There is only room for two cars in the 'layby' at the grid ref given, without causing an obstruction. Parking is available around Dacre Gardens, a couple of minutes walk further up the road (north). Please do not venture up the track/private driveway or cross the private lawned area to its left. Please do not attempt to climb the fence - this is an active industrial site. Please do not ask Dudman's staff if you can enter the site - they will not allow this on H&S grounds.

BWs, Neil

P.S. Please note I am away all weekend in London so will not be able to answer PMs or emails.









by PhiliB, 27-Sep-13 09:55 PM GMT

Congratulations Neil, I doubt that I shall ever see a better LTB photo than that open wing shot Θ You should also be able to save a few bob on petrol now!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by lainLeach, 27-Sep-13 10:14 PM GMT

agree, stunning photo

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Vince Massimo, 28-Sep-13 10:29 AM GMT

"PhiliB" wrote:

Congratulations Neil, I doubt that I shall ever see a better LTB photo than that open wing shot 😊

fantastia final and a nanfast abot fin

A fantastic find and a perfect shot Does anybody need a front cover?

Regards,

Vince

by Jack Harrison, 28-Sep-13 10:59 AM GMT

As it is unacceptable to collect these butterflies, surely it would be OK to collect Everlasting Sweet Pea seeds and sow liberally along the south coast?

Many, many, years ago in *Kipperland* (Worthing) when the Kipper was probably still in short pants. I found a blue fluttering over a council flower bed on the sea front. "Ah ha" I thought. "Perfect place for a Long-tailed Blue." It was not the sort of habitat to expect a Holly Blue.

An even "nearer miss" with LT Blues occurred on the coast at Aldeburgh Suffolk some five or six years ago. Near the sailing club was an Everlasting Sweet Pea complete with blue butterflies fluttering around it. Finally LT Blues in England . I scrambled down the steep back to the bush only to find that they were Common Blues .

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by PhiliB, 28-Sep-13 11:05 AM GMT

"Vince Massimo" wrote:

Does anybody need a front cover?

I believe a chap called N. Hulme may be looking for one.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 28-Sep-13 04:09 PM GMT

I believe a chap called N. Hulme may be looking for one.

I am privy to a back cover.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 02-Oct-13 10:28 AM GMT

Thanks Phil, Iain, Vince and Jack. Bearing in mind the rarity of LTB, I can't imagine ever getting a better opportunity. A good image with which to conclude my 2013 diary, as I won't be chasing butterflies through October this year.

Jack: The ESP plant is regarded as a weed on good quality grassland, but I'd be happy to see more of it in gardens and on some brownfield sites. Sadly, the combination of factors needed to bring the butterfly to our shores is likely to remain a quite rare event for the foreseeable future, as we're a long way north of areas where it can live year-round. That said, LTB is almost certainly under-recorded and it is likely that many smaller influxes have been missed in the past. Perhaps we will all be more vigilant after such a memorable year.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Paul Wetton, 02-Oct-13 10:48 AM GMT

Hi Neil

If you do get out and check on any sites with LTBs please let me know as I fancy one more go at finding this species before the year is out. Any info on any sites where they are still being seen would be massively appreciated.

Many thanks

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Maximus, 05-Oct-13 02:13 PM GMT

Hi Neil, your Long-tailed Blue photos have been stunning epecially the photo of the female you saw at Shoreham, surely a competiton winner!

Regards,

Mike

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 05-Oct-13 02:19 PM GMT

Maximus

Hi Neil, your Long-tailed Blue photos have been stunning

You might say that there are almost DSLR quality 😊 😉 (where's the smilie for "stir"?)





Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Oct-13 09:59 PM GMT

Thanks Mike and Jack, and glad to hear you bagged one Mike.

Paul: Just read of your success at Kingsdown. Phew! 😊



BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 06-Oct-13 10:50 PM GMT

Early Retirement Cancelled

I had decided to stop chasing butterflies this year, after getting so lucky at Beeding Cement Works, but the lure of Long-tailed Blues and a welcome return to sunshine soon changed my mind. It didn't help my resolve when I saw B. rex's shot of a mating pair - outrageous!

Today (6th October) I joined James (B. rex) and Brian Henham to look at a site on the outskirts of Newhaven. This location is particularly interesting, as it appears that the butterfly has been breeding on Broom, supplemented by a small amount of pea. My suspicions were confirmed when I found larval feeding damage on a couple of Broom seed pods. Although the morning was very slow going, despite perfect weather conditions, things began to get more interesting in the early afternoon. Eventually we saw a total of 7 male butterflies, all recognised as different on the basis of variable wear & tear. Before this season I had never seen LTB in the UK and would have been satisfied with just one; I've now seen a total of at least 22 individuals spread over three very different sites, something I would have previously regarded as rather unlikely.

The 2013 butterfly season has provided many high-points and happy memories, but the sight of a British Long-tailed Blue attacking a freshly emerged Clouded Yellow is one mental image I'll never forget!













by Paul Wetton, 07-Oct-13 09:31 AM GMT

All I can say is "Nice One" Neil.

We dipped at this site due to the weather on Saturday. I think any site with previous sightings would have been fine in the weather on Sunday.

Great shots

Re: Sussex Kipper

by cl-bucks, 07-Oct-13 06:53 PM GMT

are any details of the Newhaven/seaford site availbale? Off to Shoreham cement works and would appreciate a back up site, just in case avoiding a trip to Kent – such as heading to Minnis Bay

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 07-Oct-13 07:24 PM GMT

Go for it Neil. Start writing. We can't wait.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Oct-13 07:51 PM GMT

cl-bucks: The Tide Mills site has been producing for some time now around TQ454005, although they have also been seen quite close to the actual ruins. Also worth trying the embankment covered in Broom as you first enter Seaford on the A259.

Jack: It shouldn't take as long as the photography took!

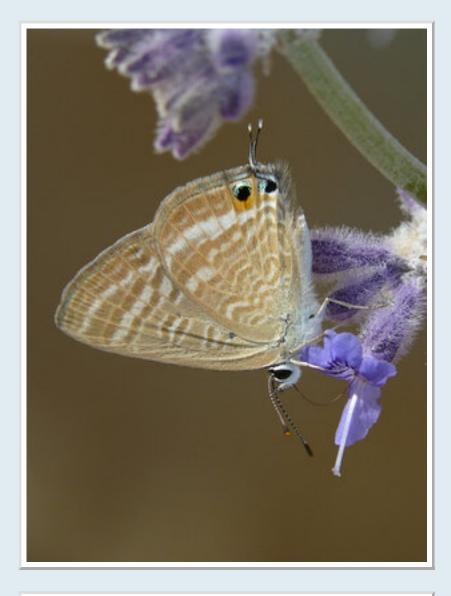
BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 08-Oct-13 06:42 PM GMT

Blues At Home

My brother Mark, who lives in Antwerp, keeps a close eye on goings-on back in Blighty. Although they can't compete with the British Long-tailed Blues we've been enjoying, here are a couple of nice shots he took in the South of France back in 2009.





Re: Sussex Kipper

by selbypaul, 08-Oct-13 08:00 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Your report from Sunday, and more specifically the photo's are literally stunning. 2013 - A butterflying year to remember forever. Paul

by Pete Eeles, 08-Oct-13 08:07 PM GMT

Couldn't agree more. I mean - they're bl**dy good photos anyway, but when you add the rarity factor they really are something special! Neil gave me a good impression of how much effort he's put in to get those shots when I spoke with him last week. My hat goes off to him $\stackrel{\square}{\Theta}$

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Sussex Kipper

by lee3764, 08-Oct-13 08:16 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Couldn't agree more. I mean - they're bl**dy good photos anyway, but when you add the rarity factor they really are something special! Neil gave me a good impression of how much effort he's put in to get those shots when I spoke with him last week. My hat goes off to him

Output

Description:

Cheers,

- Pete

I have to agree with Pete's comments. If it wasn't for Neil's enthusiasm & willingness to share the Long-tailed Blue sightings & related information on here and personally by phone then quite a few folk (including myself & my family) wouldn't have known enough to have the confidence to make a long journey to hope to see this rare migrant to our shores! This forum actually makes this species (Long-tailed Blue butterfly) seem common at present which is testiment to the power of this website's forum in bringing the lepidoptera community together when something very notable happens such as this!

Pinch yourself and you'll realise that 2013 wasn't actually a dream after all!!! © © Cheers all,

Lee Slaughter (Cornwall).

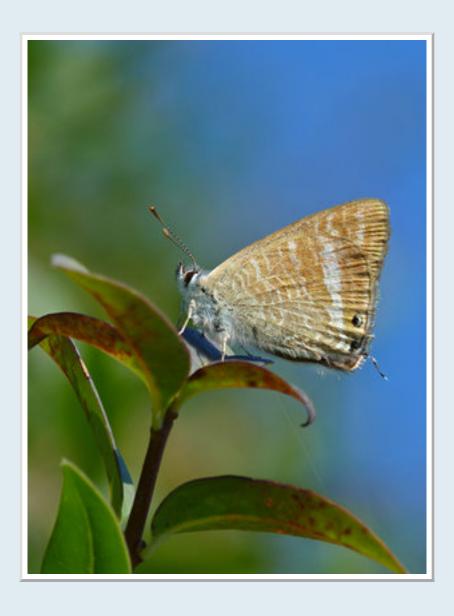
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 08-Oct-13 08:37 PM GMT

Beginning Of The End?

Long-tailed Blue action is still coming thick and fast on the north Kent coast, but I suspect we have already seen 'the beginning of the end' of this historic event in Sussex, where it has suddenly become quite tricky to find the species. Today (8th October) I spent the entire day looking for LTB in perfect weather conditions. I eventually got lucky at Southwick docks (Aldrington Canal) where a couple of LTB had been reported by John and Val Heys. Bearing in mind the suitability of habitat, and quantity of food-plant, I suspect this site might have supported a good population until recently. However, I could only find one male today. As the Sussex LTB bonanza begins to tail off, I'm determined to enjoy every sighting as if it was my last - it might be. Although a little weary looking, I would have given my right arm for a view such as that below before the 2013 season exploded.

This industrial site supported a few other species to keep me interested during my search. 6 British Clouded Yellows, all fresh and vibrant, constantly patrolled the water's edge. Most were male, but a *helice* was busy laying eggs. Common Blue, Small Copper and a few Small White were also present.







I later moved on to the site between Newhaven and Seaford where I saw at least 7 male LTB only the day before yesterday. Others had been here for several hours without a sighting, and I didn't do much better. Just after 2 pm I saw a male at the east end of the site, all too fleetingly. What a difference a couple of days make!

As the LTB sightings subside, at least locally, I've started to look at the Sussex data and try to make sense of the pattern (note: I have only calculated sex ratios where sex was confidently determined). The emergence of wild, British Long-tailed Blue in Sussex began with Colin Knight's sighting at Newhaven on 20th September. Initially, the females made all the running, with 7 females (88%) and 1 male (12%) during the first eleven days (20th – 30th September). In most species it is the males which usually appear earlier in the flight season. Things changed on the 2nd October when a spate of males brought the cumulative totals to 10 females (59%) and 7 males (41%). Since then, the balance has swayed very much in favour of the males, with 19 males (90%) and only 2 females (10%) seen between 5th and 8th October. Where did the females go at the start of October, and where are the males going now?

Jeremy Thomas considers that it is likely that Long-tailed Blues mate before migrating, unlike many other voyagers (Butterflies of Great Britain & Ireland, 2010). We know that mating has occurred in the UK, with at least 3 pairings seen (Seaford and Reculver, Kent). However, to the best of my knowledge, no egg-laying and no eggs have been observed since the British emergence began. The data suggest the possibility that mated females have been heading south, perhaps triggered by photoperiod as we passed the Autumn Equinox on 22nd September.

Male LTB also appear to be disappearing quite rapidly now from sites in Sussex. Whereas, at least for a while, numbers remained quite static (refusing to substantially build despite a succession of newly hatched individuals), we seem to have passed a tipping point, now with a rapid net reduction. I suspect the males are following the females south. Enjoy it while it lasts!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by cl-bucks, 08-Oct-13 08:45 PM GMT

thanks – re site details – tried Beeding wihtout luck, and the embankement – again without luck though there was a report of briefing sightings, but did not try Tidal Mills as I only pick up the grdi ref upon return home

by Neil Hulme, 08-Oct-13 08:53 PM GMT

Many thanks Paul, Pete and Lee - much appreciated. Without the ability to communicate so widely and rapidly, it would be very much harder for the majority of naturalists to enjoy some of the once inaccessible aspects of British Wildlife. There's sometimes a price to pay, but the more we enjoy it, the more we're likely to conserve it.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Maximus, 08-Oct-13 09:05 PM GMT

Hi Neil, with galeforce winds from the north forecast (especially in Kent) for Thursday and Friday, perhaps the LTB's will 'hitch a lift' south to warmer climes.

Mike

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 08-Oct-13 09:08 PM GMT

"lee3764" wrote:

I have to agree with Pete's comments. If it wasn't for Neil's enthusiasm & willingness to share the Long-tailed Blue sightings & related information on here and personally by phone then quite a few folk (including myself & my family) wouldn't have known enough to have the confidence to make a long journey to hope to see this rare migrant to our shores! This forum actually makes this species (Long-tailed Blue butterfly) seem common at present which is testiment to the power of this website's forum in bringing the lepidoptera community together when something very notable happens such as this!

Pinch yourself and you'll realise that 2013 wasn't actually a dream after all!!!



Good post, Lee.

Yes, Neil is infectiously enthusiastic and a willing giver of his time and fieldcraft savvy to anyone who wishes to elicit information.

I was lucky to bump into him at Botany Bay during July, and my knowledge of Purple Emperor behaviour must have increased twenty-fold in a mere half hour of his company.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 08-Oct-13 10:28 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Beginning Of The End?

Male LTB also appear to be disappearing quite rapidly now from sites in Sussex. Whereas, at least for a while, numbers remained quite static (refusing to substantially build despite a succession of newly hatched individuals), we seem to have passed a tipping point, now with a rapid net reduction. I suspect the males are following the females south. Enjoy it while it lasts!

I am really glad to read this. I had assumed that these long tailed blues and any eggs they had/were going to lay were doomed (DOOMED I say ...) so it's a really nice thought that they'll be sunning themselves in foreign parts soon.

A huge thanks from me also for all the assistance you have given and for your wonderful photos.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by NickMorgan, 09-Oct-13 01:25 PM GMT

Really interesting posts about the Long-tailed Blues and Clouded Yellows. It is great to hear that butterflies are still doing well down there. The season more-or-less came to an end here at the beginning of September. I was hoping for a late hot spell with the hope that some Clouded Yellows would have made it up here!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 09-Oct-13 06:44 PM GMT

Last Chance Saloon

I hope that there will be more opportunities and I believe that more Long-tailed Blues will almost certainly emerge, but I suspect that the best is now

over in Sussex, particularly with the forecast of much less favourable weather to come. After attending to some business in Brighton this morning (9th October) I returned to the Southwick site (Grid Ref: TQ24820502), where a couple of friends were already busy searching. With sunshine predicted to disappear by early afternoon there was little time in which to work. Fortunately the Long-tailed Blues played ball and we enjoyed a good spell of action before the cloud built and the temperature dropped.

I quickly spotted a male LTB in reasonable condition, but missing a tail. This was undoubtedly the insect I saw here yesterday. While a small group of us started to photograph it I noticed another male only a few metres away, this time in much worse condition, particularly over its rear left wing. While the better specimen had gone AWOL a female appeared from nowhere and was accosted at lighting speed. A couple of us watched the frantic pursuit, which took the butterflies far out over the water until they were lost from sight. It wasn't long before another male appeared, this time fully tailed, undamaged but very faded. In the space of an hour we had seen 3 different males and a female!

Several enthusiasts turned up at just the right time and managed to see their first LTB with ease. Sadly, a couple more turned up just too late. With sunshine forecast tomorrow it must be worth trying this site if you are yet to connect, despite the fall in temperature. The Clouded Yellows continue to put on a good show here.



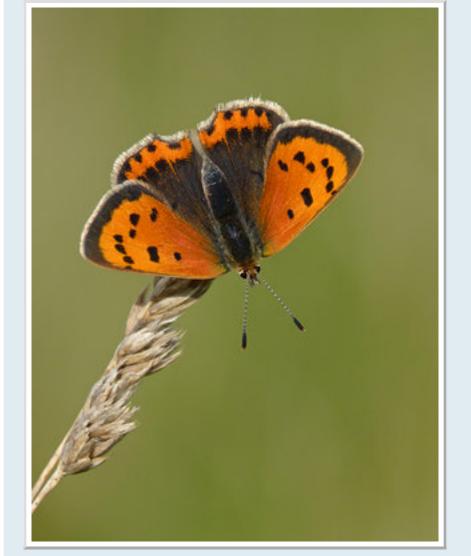


Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 15-Oct-13 09:59 PM GMT

The Last Chapter

Despite drawing a blank during my thorough search of Sussex Long-tailed Blue sites today (15th October), suggesting that the majority have probably now flown south, there still seems to be life left in the season. A late afternoon stop at Cissbury Ring produced some beautiful, fresh specimens of Small Copper and Clouded Yellow. On a sunny afternoon this is a great place to enjoy the last chapter of a fantastic butterfly year.









by Neil Hulme, 20-Oct-13 03:33 PM GMT

History Repeats Itself

While my mother was spending some time in the Royal Sussex County Hospital (many thanks to the excellent surgeon and nurses) last Thursday (17th October), I took a wander around the rough grassland area situated a few hundred metres to the north, between the TV transmitter and Brighton Racecourse. This area borders the extensive allotments where Tessa Pawsey reported a Long-tailed Blue on 8th October. There is probably a wide variety of potential food-plants here, between the potting sheds and shrubs.

History has repeated itself because Tessa's Long-tailed Blue, and the minimum of 6 different males I found here, were probably very close to the location of Britain's first, recorded way back in 1859 "near Kemp Town". A further sighting, of which there have been only 22 in Sussex before 2013 (Pratt, 2011), occurred in 1890 "near the racecourse". E. Newman referred to the Long-tailed Blue as the "Brighton Argus".

Bearing in mind that all other known Sussex sites for Long-tailed Blue have been empty for a while (although an undisclosed site is reportedly still producing), I was surprised to see this number. I'm pretty sure that the answer lies in the altitude of the site. At a shade under 400' amsl, lower temperatures probably slowed development of the early stages. How many are still lurking on the allotments? Sadly, the weather we are predicted to suffer over the next week may preclude any more sightings this year.









Re: Sussex Kipper

by Goldie M, 20-Oct-13 04:53 PM GMT

I'm getting green with envey at all the LTB's being found 😇 😁



Your Photo's are great Sussex Kipper I just wish I lived nearer so I could check some of these sites out, abit late now though I'll just have to wait and hope next year is a good one again. Goldie 🤝

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 20-Oct-13 05:47 PM GMT

Neil

That's at least four sites where you have seen LT Blues this year, two of which you have discovered yourself. Correct me if I'm wrong.

I do realise that 2013 has been an exceptional year for immigrants but with the knowledge - habitats, etc - you and others have gained in this golden season, surely it will be much easier in the future to find LTBs in "normal" years?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 20-Oct-13 07:14 PM GMT

Neil, roughly how many individual LTBs do you think you've seen?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 20-Oct-13 08:11 PM GMT

Goldie M: Thanks Goldie. I'm equally envious of your fabulous, white Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries! Perhaps we could do a trade; one of your SPBF abs. for a half a dozen of my Long-tailed Blues?

Jack: I've seen LTBs on five different sites, namely Kingsdown Leas in Kent, Beeding Cement Works and Southwick (Aldrington Canal) in West Sussex, and Brighton Racecourse and Seaford in East Sussex. I never connected with them at Newhaven Tide Mills or Birling Gap, and never made it to Minnis Bay. Like many others, I'm now far more knowledgeable about LTB than I was before this season, and I have its 'jizz' firmly engrained in my memory banks. I'm certainly more likely to pick up on the species at range than I was before. I'm sure many of us will be actively searching in future autumns, perhaps leading to a greater level of detection.

David M: I have an accurate record of what I've seen, based on either individuals I've photographed or seen sufficiently well to note the pattern of wear and tear. So I can confidently say I've seen a minimum of 33 individuals over 5 sites. In reality it's probably a few more than that.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by lee3764, 20-Oct-13 11:08 PM GMT

"I've seen a minimum of 33 individuals over 5 sites"

You have seen with your total of 33 different individuals, just 5 short of the total of 38 recorded individual Long-tailed Blues across the whole of the UK in the infamous & historic migrant year of 1945. I believe the record 38 recorded that year still held as a record until now in 2013? All your effort.....you must be well pleased! Britain needs a proper book on "Butterfly Migration"....Maybe you could be the person now with enough experience with these species in Britain to make this a reality? (eg: Queen of Spain Frits in 2009) etc.

With your virtually perfect photos too this could be a top quality publication!

Just a suggestion Neil.

All the best & thanks for the entertainment for the last 2 months on this fascination subject.

With best wishes,

Lee Slaughter (Cornwall).

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 21-Oct-13 03:49 PM GMT

Thanks Lee. There is something in the pipeline, but it's of a more general nature.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 21-Oct-13 07:19 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Thanks Lee. There is something in the pipeline, but it's of a more general nature.

BWs, Neil

Interesting stuff, Neil.

'Butterfly Bushcraft' would be a worthy subject, since you are imbued with an unnaturally good sixth sense.

Just from a personal perspective, the advice you've given ME regarding the optimum time of day to observe female Brown Hairstreaks and how to approach a grounded Purple Emperor is not something one could obtain via literature.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 24-Oct-13 08:48 PM GMT

33-1 Outsider

With the South Coast being battered by heavy rain and high winds over the last week, it has become increasingly likely that we will soon be saying goodbye to the Long-tailed Blue. Although it is probable that a few specimens are yet to emerge, and may be found by very lucky individuals, deliberately setting out to see this species is becoming difficult.

One of my regrets has been that my father has been unable to get out and see a Long-tailed Blue. Today's short respite from the poor weather seemed to provide the very last, slimmest chance of seeing one, so we headed to Brighton Racecourse. Having made a miraculous recovery from recent surgery my mother came along too.

I'm delighted to say we got lucky. One battered male had weathered the storms and was still holding court where I'd left him on 17th October. The Long-tailed Blue can now be added to a list of very special butterflies, including Queen of Spain, Camberwell Beauty and Large Tortoiseshell, that I've been lucky enough to share with my father over the years. After all, he ignited my interest forty five years ago, so this is all his fault!







Male assembly area near the racecourse



Breeding area - Whitehawk Hill Allotments

by Butterflysaurus rex, 24-Oct-13 08:56 PM GMT

Just wonderful, what an amazing list of rarities you've shared with your dad 😊



Glad to know your mums recovered too.

All the best

B'saurus

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 25-Oct-13 01:41 AM GMT

Regards to your parents Neil. I have met them but I doubt they'd remember me and indeed I doubt I would recognise them. I am so delighted that your old man finally got to see Long-tailed Blue.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 25-Oct-13 08:45 AM GMT

B. rex: Thanks James. Days out with my father certainly provide some of my happiest butterflying memories. He just needs to find me a Pale Clouded Yellow now.

Jack: They certainly do remember you! You must have made a lasting impression 👻 . My father does ask after you and is aware that you've been exiled to a secure island.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 25-Oct-13 09:18 AM GMT

They Think It's All Over ...

I think it's highly unlikely that I'll see another Long-tailed Blue this year, and probably won't see another for a very long time, at least in the UK. From now onwards, whenever I see this species on holidays to the Canary Islands, I'll look at it in a completely different light.

Here are a couple of images I never got round to posting at the time. The first is the underside of a lovely female seen at Beeding Cement Works on 27th September. The wing detail from a male seen at Seaford on 6th October shows that lovely lilac blue colour which many of us have come to love over the late summer and autumn of 2013. Happy days!





Re: Sussex Kipperby Jack Harrison, 25-Oct-13 10:51 AM GMT

Those scales are amazing.

Jack: They [parents] certainly do remember you! You must have made a lasting impression 📦 .

Probably because I was wide (fat) enough to block the woodland ride 😊



Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 29-Oct-13 04:35 PM GMT

Last Of 2013?

Incredibly, 2 male Clouded Yellows were still patrolling the banks of the Aldrington Canal at Southwick this afternoon. These might be my last butterflies of the great 2013 season.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 29-Oct-13 05:39 PM GMT

2 male Clouded Yellows

With your incredible good fortune - maybe I should say skill - are you sure that they were not the North American equivalent Colias eurytheme? 🐸

Yesterday's gales might have brought almost anything across the Atlantic. I once bred eurytheme from a female captured in Washington DC and they do look remarkably like our European Clouded Yellows.

Just joking of course – or am !?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 29-Oct-13 05:42 PM GMT

Must admit, I was wondering if any Monarchs might have been blown our way by the storm yesterday.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Oct-13 11:59 AM GMT

Work Party Season Commences

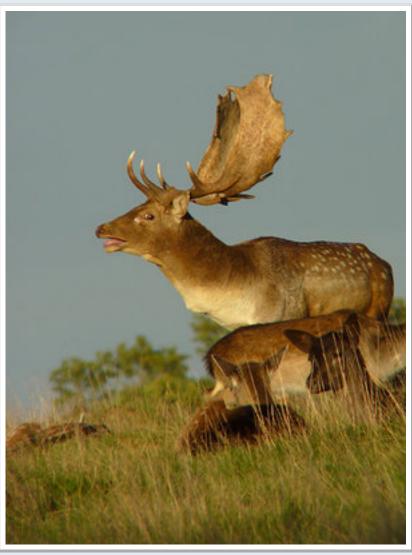
It's that time of year again when I always endeavour to do as much as I can to help our butterflies, as a 'payback' for all the enjoyment they've given me this summer. I usually start earlier in the year, but I've been distracted by the Long-tailed Blue and a few domestic matters this autumn.

Yesterday (30th October) I joined UKBer Colin Knight and members of the Murray Downland Trust to work in the lowermost pit at Heyshott Escarpment. This area is beginning to develop very nicely and from next spring onwards should hopefully become home to Duke of Burgundy, Pearl-bordered Fritillary (assuming they have managed to get a foot in the door here), Grizzled and Dingy Skipper. During a brief spell of warm sunshine we were treated to a flurry of activity from both male and female Brimstone. They appeared from nowhere and seemed to disappear into nowhere with characteristic ease.

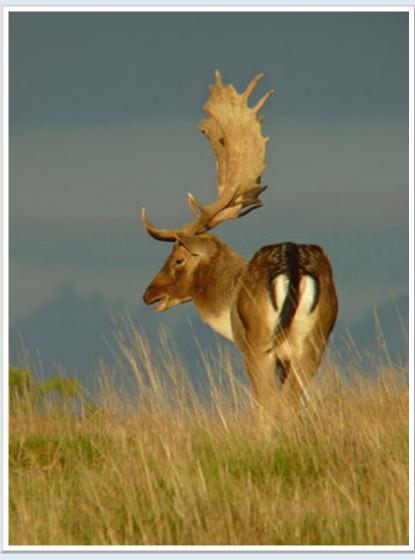


I then moved on to Petworth Park to watch the Fallow rut. For the first hour there was plenty of posturing and belching (the bucks, not me), but all hell suddenly broke loose and I decided that I was perhaps a little too close to the action! On a serious note, always try to stay comfortably on the conservative side of a safe distance, and even further away until you have learned a little bit about their body language.









by Goldie M, 31-Oct-13 02:54 PM GMT

Great photo's of the Deer Sussex Skipper, your braver than I am Goldie 😊



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 31-Oct-13 04:01 PM GMT

Neil is

braver than I am

says Goldie.

How about a thought for me? I lost my bottle when I couldn't park the car a few minutes ago while I waited for a scary-looking HEDGEHOG to get out of

It was VERY BIG.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 31-Oct-13 05:42 PM GMT

Great photos of the stag. They always smell so strongly this time of year. Very musky indeed. Do they still have the white stag there?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Gruditch, 31-Oct-13 07:07 PM GMT

Buck Susie 😉



Sorry to butt in on you diary Kipper.

Regards Gruditch

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Oct-13 08:21 PM GMT

Thanks all.

Acceptable butting Gary ... good point.

No white Fallow there as far as I'm aware Susie, although I know there are a few on the Angmering Park Estate at the moment.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 31-Oct-13 08:32 PM GMT

Snow Bunting

In recent years I've started to spend a bit more time birding during the colder months, rekindling the interest I showed in my youth. Today I spent about 30 minutes on Goring beach, looking at the very obliging Snow Bunting that was first spotted yesterday. It's always a pleasure to see this attractive little bird, not least because it reminds me of the years I spent in Scotland.









by Jack Harrison, 31-Oct-13 08:48 PM GMT

Cracking little birds and so tame (approachable). Distant flocks of 30 to 50 (as found in North Norfolk on occasions) are wonderful in low winter sunshine: they look like snowflakes.

Winter is clearly not far round the corner - first Fieldfares yesterday.

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 31-Oct-13 09:03 PM GMT

"Gruditch" wrote:

Buck Susie 🙂

Sorry to butt in on you diary Kipper.

Regards Gruditch

I didn't realise there was a difference until now.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by mud-puddling, 31-Oct-13 10:54 PM GMT

Nice shots Neil; looks like it was quite obliging for you. I went at lunch but it was quite flighty and couldnt get any decent photos. Though still nice to see. Regards, Leigh

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 03-Nov-13 07:23 PM GMT

Planting Plugs

This morning (3rd November) I joined BC Sussex members Mavis and Alan Hards at Rewell Wood near Arundel. We were there to plant out the 140 cowslip plants that they have kindly grown on from seedlings. These were distributed over areas where the Norfolk Estate has generously helped by widening the woodland rides, and where BC Sussex and the South Downs National Park Authority have recently financed the extensive removal of old stumps, allowing for 'cut and collect' management of the grass and scrub. I have little doubt that this work will be of benefit to the Duke of Burgundy, so wish to say a big "thank you" to Mavis, Alan and everyone else involved in the work here.



The beech trees were looking magnificent in their autumn colours, particularly on such a sunny day. The warmth was enough to attract a few butterflies out, including 10 Red Admiral and a Peacock. On the way to and from the site I stopped off at Goring beach, to spend more time with the very obliging Snow Bunting.

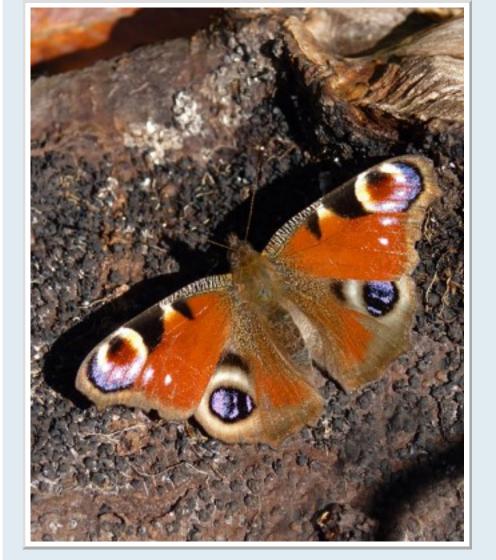




Re: Sussex Kipper by Neil Hulme, 04-Nov-13 02:43 PM GMT

The Last Shall Be First

I had an hour free this morning (4th November), so headed back to one of my favourite parts of Rewell Wood. I couldn't help but notice the similarity between the selection of butterflies seen today and those most likely to show on the first warm, sunny day in February or March. 11 Red Admiral, 3 Peacock and 2 Comma provided a final flourish to the season. Of course the big difference between now and late winter is the fantastic display of autumn colours.









by lee3764, 04-Nov-13 04:36 PM GMT

No Long-Tailed Blues there I suppose Neil?? 😐 😉 Cheers, Lee Slaughter (Cornwall)

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Jack Harrison, 04-Nov-13 04:44 PM GMT

Well, Comma is another tick on my suggested December list. But no Specklies?

Jack

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 07-Nov-13 11:12 AM GMT

Hi Lee and Jack,

Sadly no LTBs, or even Specklies. It's beginning to look increasingly likely that I managed to show my parents the last LTB seen in the UK this year. I'm already dreaming of what 2014 might bring.

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Wurzel, 07-Nov-13 10:16 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Snow Bunting Sussex 😇 – I saw my first and only one two years ago and the "footage" is still mblazined on my memory 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Nov-13 07:25 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. If you're in the area it's worth dropping in on this one (still there today). They are almost always 'friendly', but this one shows down to about 1 metre!

BWs, Neil

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 10-Nov-13 08:03 PM GMT

Woodland Walks

Today (10th November) I stopped briefly at Coldwaltham Brooks, where I managed distant views of the Great Grey Shrike which has been around for a couple of days. Just before leaving I spotted my first Red Admiral of the day.

Next stop was Rewell Wood, where I was a little disappointed to find only a couple of Red Admiral. However, the fast developing autumn colours were far from disappointing.



Rewell Wood

Lastly, I took a longer walk around Stansted Forest in the far west of the county. I only saw a single Comma, but once again the views more than made up for the lack of butterflies.



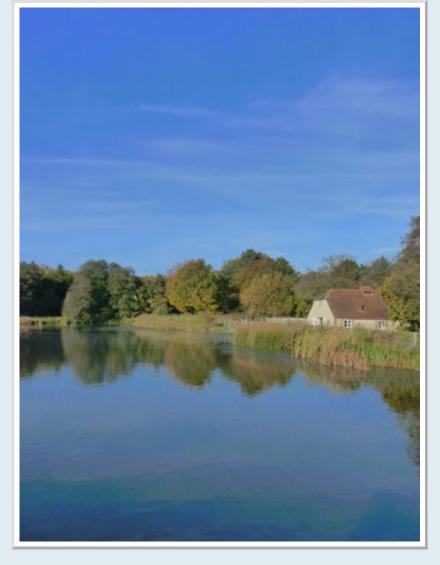
Stansted House

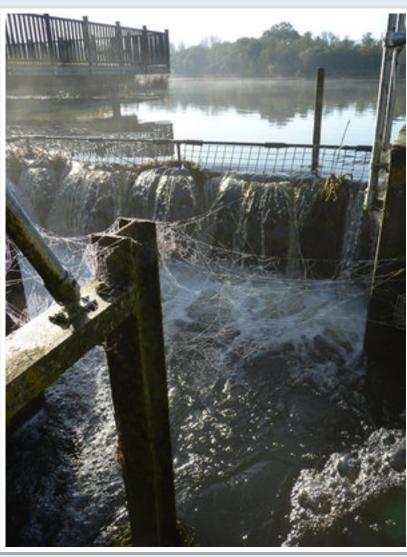
Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 14-Nov-13 01:16 PM GMT

Heyshott Again

Yesterday (13th November) I headed towards Heyshott Escarpment for the weekly work party. However, I couldn't pass Burton Mill Pond without stopping to enjoy the view. This beautiful lake is full of fat, green Tench and although I haven't fished for many years, I always get the urge to cast a line whenever I stand on the dam wall. It won't be long before the first Bitterns of winter arrive.





As I approached Heyshott I could see the wood-smoke from the work party bonfires, rising then hanging low against the wooded slope in the still, damp autumn air.



Seven members of the Murray Downland Trust and BC Sussex spent the morning brush-cutting and raking the plateaus and pits in Compartment 10, part of a rolling programme of rotational habitat management.



Once the day's work was finished I stayed a while to enjoy the autumn colours on the reserve. I always think the Heyshott Beech trees are particularly beautiful, but everything about Heyshott seems to be beautiful.

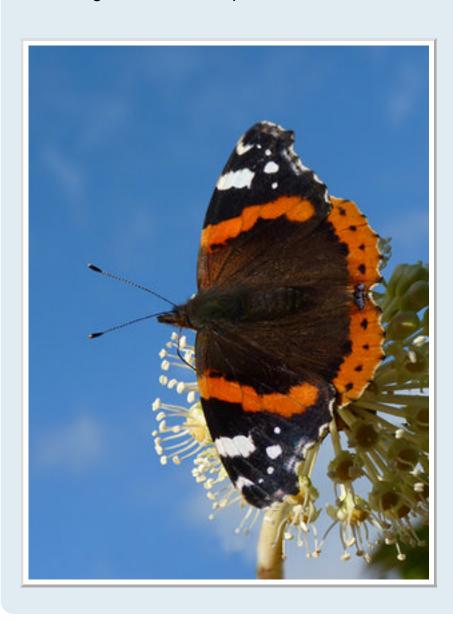




by Neil Hulme, 14-Nov-13 01:40 PM GMT

Garden Visitors

Despite the low temperature 3 Red Admirals appeared in my Worthing back garden this morning (14th November), attracted to my Fatsia japonica along with a large number of wasps and hoverflies.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Susie, 14-Nov-13 09:40 PM GMT

Lovely photos. Burton mill pond is a favourite spot of mine.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 19-Nov-13 09:42 AM GMT

Hi Jack,

I had time to read your comment/question before the system threw a wobbly and your post went AWOL.

Almost all of the landscape shots I take are with the mode button set to SCN and the programme choice set to High Dynamic.

All butterfly shots are taken with the mode button set to P and Conversion option set to On (to allow for attachment of lens adapter and close-up lens). The only other thing I've ever changed is Exposure, using a -2/3 setting as standard and -1 for Whites or highly reflective butterflies.

BWs, Neil

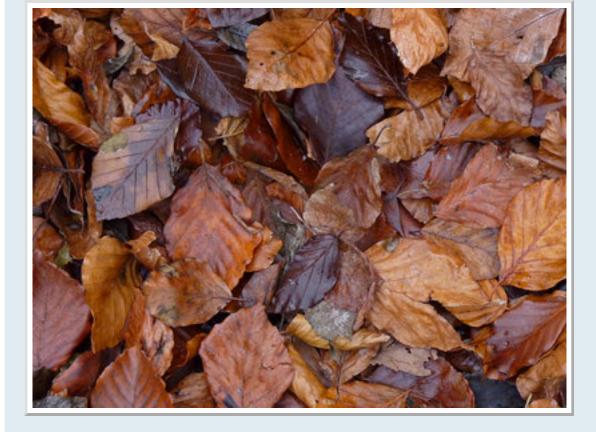
by Neil Hulme, 28-Nov-13 11:37 AM GMT

Working Wednesdays

The weekly programme of work parties at Heyshott Escarpment was thankfully unaffected by rain this week. It was great to see such a strong turnout, with a dozen participants being equally split between those representing the Murray Downland Trust and BC Sussex. It was particularly nice to see a couple of new faces. After the usual strimming, raking, cutting and burning, I took an hour to enjoy the quiet that descends upon the slopes here at this time of year. Although the best of the autumn colours have passed, it is still a magical place to be, with only a flock of noisy Fieldfares disturbing the peace.







by Neil Hulme, 03-Dec-13 08:40 PM GMT

Brown Hairstreaks And Grey Shrikes

This afternoon (3rd December) I went walking on the downs around Chanctonbury Ring, parking at Washington and walking up through the disused chalk pits. The briefest of searches located my first Brown Hairstreak eggs of the winter, only a couple of hundred metres from the car park. I've always found them here in previous years, but it usually requires some effort to locate just one or two. Today I found 7 in under five minutes, including 2 pairs. It's too early to draw any conclusions yet, but this does look quite promising for a good 2013 crop.

At Chanctonbury Ring I soon located the recently reported Great Grey Shrike. This occasional winter visitor has turned up in a few Sussex locations already this year, and is always a joy to see. I spent nearly two hours watching it, during which time it took seven earthworms. Worms are sometimes cited as comprising a small part of the Great Grey Shrike's diet, but this individual was clearly very focused on pursuing this food source. It appeared to be listening and watching for movement amongst the fallen beech leaves, before swooping with great accuracy.











by mud-puddling, 04-Dec-13 08:10 AM GMT

Nice shots Neil! Looks like you had some cracking views of this enigmatic bird. Think I may have to have a walk up there when I get a chance. Cheers

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 05-Dec-13 09:58 AM GMT

More Heyshott

Yesterday (4th December) I joined the regular Wednesday work party at Heyshott Escarpment. We had originally intended to assist with the controlled burn of a local heathland site later in the afternoon, but with sufficient helpers on hand we were not needed. This left a few of us free to work until after 3 pm, allowing us to coppice a large area of hazel on the eastern edge of the reserve. This will not only create more habitat for butterflies (and hopefully orchids), but also allow much more sunlight into an established but currently quite shady glade. As is often the case at Heyshott, the conservation work is also bringing aesthetic benefits by opening up lovely new vistas, in this case northwards out over the Weald. Mike Hadley (Murray Downland Trust http://www.murraydownlandtrust.blogspot.co.uk) and Nigel Symington (BC Sussex) are pictured taking a well-earned rest.



Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 08-Dec-13 06:49 PM GMT

Latest Record

Early this afternoon (8th December) I was surprised to see a male Brimstone fly across the South Downs Way, as I climbed the slope towards Chanctonbury Ring. This is the latest I have ever seen the species active.

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 11-Dec-13 07:56 PM GMT

Heyshott In The Mist

This morning (11th December) I couldn't drive over Bury Hill (near Arundel) without stopping to marvel at the view. A thick mist filled the Arun Valley below and refused to budge from much of the countryside around Heyshott, where I attended the weekly work party along with another 10 members of the Murray Downland Trust and BC Sussex branch. As always, good progress was made in further improving the habitat for butterflies and other fauna and flora. It was also a chance to collect a little mistletoe for the house. One tree in particular is spectacularly draped in this parasitic plant. A pair of Mistle Thrush left the tree as I approached, probably having gorged themselves on the fruit.







by Susie, 11-Dec-13 08:37 PM GMT

I love those photos so much. Especially the first and last ones. When to you finish work parties for xmas?

Re: Sussex Kipper

by Neil Hulme, 11-Dec-13 08:50 PM GMT

Thanks Susie. Last work party before New Year is next week, Wednesday 18th December. We then restart on Wednesday 8th January 2014. It would be great to see you if you can make it along to one ... and I'll show you where the mistletoe is!

Re: Sussex Kipper

by David M, 11-Dec-13 08:56 PM GMT

Lovely, atmospheric images there, Neil.

This time of year has a certain addictive austerity to it.

I'm not surprised you saw a Brimstone. He probably thought it was spring! I'm thinking of doing the unthinkable this Saturday – going out looking for butterflies in December.

The days have been 8-10c here for the past week, whilst night-time temperatures have been barely below that. Saturday is set sunny and fair so why not?